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COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS
TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 1294.

OFF THE SKELLIGS BY JEAN INGELOW.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

COLLECTION

OF

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OF THE SKILLING BY LEAN INGLETON

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II

1334

OFF THE SKELLIGS

BY

JEAN INGELow.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1873.

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JEAN INGELW

GEORGE W. BROWN

IN THREE VOLUMES

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OFF THE SKELLIGS.

CHAPTER I.

"To his own master, he standeth or falleth."

How much people talk about their first impressions of a foreign country. It was about six o'clock, and dark with thunder-clouds, and pouring with rain, when I was told we had entered the French harbour, and were lying opposite to the Douane. My luggage, consisting of one little box, was landed, so was Miss Tott's; and we waited on board till it had passed, sitting under umbrellas. Poor Miss Tott was fainting for air, and longing to get away from the scene of her misery. Uncle Rollin, at the last moment, took alarm and declined to land, but said he would wait at Havre till we returned from Chartres. It was, therefore, a point of honour to be as quick as we could, and I found that Mr. Brandon and Tom had decided on our going on to Chartres that same evening; a cab was waiting to convey us to the railway station. We had dined; but poor Miss Tott had eaten nothing since breakfast, so I made Brand give us a goodly basket of provisions to carry with us.

We were a party of six, including the children. Miss Tott and I were surprised to find ourselves in a decided mist, we had hardly expected mist out of England. The rain was uncommonly like English rain. The railway carriage had the same defect,—this was disappointing; but we had the satisfaction of hearing the railway officials quarrelling in real French. Nothing to be seen: rain, mist, thunder-clouds. We soon unpacked our great basket of provisions. Miss Tott was terribly vexed at having to eat an English pigeon pie and salad on French soil; and after that, slices of cake, also such a thoroughly English dish! and then Stilton cheese; and, lastly, strawberries; but by ten o'clock we had done all this with appetite, and then taken off the children's hats and laid them on the seat to go to sleep.

As the dusk came on the rain ceased, and Miss Tott and I gazed diligently out of the windows; but darkness, we were obliged to own, looks much the same everywhere.

We saw hardly anything, even when we reached Paris; for the children woke up and cried most piteously. We were soon shut up in a room with numbers of people, half of whom spoke as good English as ourselves, and then the officials, storming at Mr. Brandon and the parcels we wanted to have with us, hustled us into a carriage, where, to our disgust, we

had to sit for at least ten minutes before the train started.

We slumbered while it was dark, and day had just dawned on a perfectly flat country, when we first saw the graceful spires of Chartres Cathedral.

All very tired, some very cross, we drove to an hotel, and straightway went to bed till nine o'clock, when I woke and peeped out.

Ah, yes, this was foreign indeed!—a fine broad *place*, houses with two or three tiers of windows in the roof, women without bonnets, the clatter of wooden shoes, and a vast amount of joyous jabbering. A big diligence at the door, with three white cart-horses harnessed abreast thereto. (It looked like a haystack on wheels, and was covered with a tarpauling). A market and a fair going on, tables with smoking-hot coffee, and round loaves in the shape of a ring upon them; bakers' boys bringing these round their arms, and round their necks, great heaps of apples, pears, late cherries, stacks of plums, stains of fruit all over the stones, great rugged melons that did not seem half ripe, tiny French men and French women sitting on them in their little blue pinafores and wooden shoes, and the sun pouring down over all as it never can in England so early in the morning. Inside, the windows swarmed with flies, and the floor was tiled: cheering sights, so foreign.

Miss Tott and I dressed the children in their new

clothes, then we rang, were conducted to a *salon*, where we found Tom and Mr. Brandon, and where we ate a remarkable breakfast, consisting of fried potatoes, rice-pudding, eggs, rolls as long as our arms, boiled pigeons, and wine.

Tom and I were very anxious to get to the cathedral; so, as soon as we had breakfasted, we left Miss Tott and Mr. Brandon to take the children to their grandmother, and set forth, intending to find our way and not to ask it, for it was rather a shock to us to discover that the French spoken by the natives was not quite so intelligible to us as we had confidently expected to find it.

It would not have been easy, however, to lose our way, foreign though we now felt the place to be; the sun on our backs was especially foreign, so was the shop we entered. It was full of the strangest little images, and most of them were black.

We bought the Abbé Bulteau's description of the cathedral, a good-sized book, and learned that the ugly little black dolls represented the celebrated black Virgin. I bought also a Roman Catholic service-book; and we went on a little further, till on a sudden turn the two grand spires stood before us, and the wonderful doors, deep and solemn in the shade, and strangely crowded and guarded by quaint carvings of bishops, saints, apostles, and kings, all bearing that peculiar

look which distinguishes so much of the sculpture of the middle ages.

Innocence, purity, devotion, and a kind of saintly calm, was impressed on their impassive faces, and there was something majestic in the deeply-cut folds of the raiment which covered them; but there was in most of them a want of muscle, and force, and manliness; of active thought and towering intellect which at first, as I gazed, disturbed me; but after a long look I felt that the men who carved them so were right, for if they had showed any marks of longing, activity, or command, it would have been painful to think of them as imprisoned there so long.

We entered; shall I ever forget the sudden sense of coolness and shade after the glare of the world outside? We had stepped into some glorious gloom back into time, leaving the noise, and light, and stir of our century behind us; here was an old-world cavern; a grand old roof hung over it, and it was all fluted and fine with hundreds of shafts, and letting in a deep and sombre rainbow through every one of its hundred and thirty coloured windows.

We both stood amazed: they seemed to be little more than semi-translucent. If a peacock's tail and a dove's neck could suddenly have let the light filter through them, and could have added some deep, delightful ruby stains to their own blue, and green, and brown, and orange glows, they would have been like

one of the windows, but there were so many, and they were all different.

Oh! how beautiful, how fearful! how grand!

I sat down to take my fill of gazing. I saw in the clerestory windows the quaint, old giant kings, and priests, and heroes staring down in their jewelled head-gear and Minevere mantles. Then I stole into the aisles, and marked the gorgeous windows presented by the trades of the town, their artful glories, all different and splendid, and yet the homely, ancient simpleness of their detail.

I understood, then, for the first time, what man can do with colour, and felt the peculiar sensation which is the real root of what attracts and arrests us away from home; that sense of incongruity, that special way of putting things together, which foreigners feel to be different from anything they ever do.

Suddenly it became to my English eyes all out of keeping, for near the marvellous old stone screen that divides the nave from the quire there was a small, gilded nook, and, in a moment, all the splendour of the grandest art appeared to give way to a childish, shabby piece of finery, like a show at a fair.

The Virgin; the hideous black Virgin! there she stood on a projecting bracket; a vulgar, wooden doll, clad in cloth of woven gold, and frightful in her jewels, with those staring eyes and shapeless arms.

About twenty rushlights were burning before her;

they were stuck on the spikes of a gilt railing, which kept the faithful from touching her, and they winked and guttered down in the daylight, dropping on some flowers which grew in pots below.

I saw four women kneeling and pressing their lips against the railing, their faces were full of adoration, and their eyes gazed at the image. How often had I been told that they did not pray to the image, but to what it represents. I had religiously believed this. I shall never have that comfort again.

The women rose, bowed deeply to the image, and when they were gone I drew near, and Tom came up with the sacristan.

"Yes, Monsieur was right, he now beheld the celebrated black Virgin, the chief ornament of the cathedral. It had been brought down, did Monsieur understand, by two angels."

"No; Monsieur thought he could not have understood aright."

"The angels brought it direct from heaven. The two angels made it."

"What! in heaven?"

"Precisely; thus you see it is sacred."

Monsieur shook his head, and in bad deliberate French observed, looking round him, "that the work of angels looked very poor beside that of men."

"But, Monsieur is an Englishman," said the man. Monsieur wished to see the bones of St. Piat.

"Yes, we should see them when the priest who had the key returned. But, Mademoiselle would not find them very interesting, for all but the nose was covered with artificial flowers."

This was such a ghastly idea that I declined to see them. Here again was the strange incongruity, and the same man who thought the doll so precious, did not hesitate to spit upon the floor, very near to where she stood.

Then he took us to see several altars, on each of which stood ornaments of plaster, like those on wedding cakes; and to several niches, in which were large figures, like those in hairdressers' shops—their gowns were trimmed with nun's lace, and their hair had flowers in it.

Mr. Brandon just then came up. He had been looking for us.

"Well, what do you think of it?" he whispered.

"Oh! think: I cannot think there is such solemn, awful splendour and such trash and rubbish. Look at that lovely roof, and then look at those dirty flowers that a kitchen-maid would scorn to wear; look how dirty the floor is."

"Ah! I have seen that sort of thing often. Did you see the Virgin over the great door?"

"I only saw two figures."

"That was our Saviour crowning Mary Queen of Heaven, and declaring her equal with Himself."

The quire gates were then unlocked, and the sacristan began to show us the carving.

"Monsieur will please to notice," he said, still following Tom, "that it is not with us, as in many places, less celebrated places, places to which, as one may say, the more delicate needs of civilisation have not penetrated, and where the priests and quire have to spit on the floor."

He pointed to long things like mignonette boxes filled with sawdust.

"Voilà," said he, with no small pride; "pour les Prêtres, et voilà pour Monseigneur."

We peeped into the bishop's throne, and, true enough, there stood a little one!

I felt very angry with them. I had expected such great reverence and costliness. I thought these belonged to the ideal of the religion.

"They are not dirty because they are Roman Catholics," said Mr. Brandon. "Frenchmen can be dirty whatever their faith, or want of faith. You know," he continued, "the Roman Catholic prelates keep up a beautiful old custom that ours have relinquished: after service, on Sunday, they come out and bless the people. Once, when I was at Coutances, the venerable old archbishop came out in his golden mitre and all the stiff splendour of his robes, and lifted up his hand, holding it high over the crowd as he stood on the top of the great steps. With the other hand, as I

presently observed, he was fumbling in his breast, and soon, by slow degrees, I saw him draw out an immense blue cotton handkerchief, which was checked like the dusters that housemaids use—he flourished it, blew his nose, and then, more people having gathered together, he again raised his hand in blessing, and no one saw anything strange and sordid in the blue handkerchief but myself.”

“I do not think that would have offended me. The handkerchief was his own, the gems and the robes perhaps belonged to his office or to the cathedral. Still it must have damaged the beauty of the spectacle.”

“Perhaps you are regarding all this as a spectacle only.”

“Perhaps I am. I must say I feel as much repelled by the want of cleanliness, for instance, as by the crowned Queen of Heaven over the door. And that must be wrong.”

As we came to the west door and stepped out, he said, “Yes, and don’t you feel a burning desire to set it right for them—taste, and dogma, and all!! What leisure there must be up in heaven: you see God is in no hurry with them. Yet I think He will set them right at last, and perhaps we shall have to be set right too.”

“But I don’t see how we can be *very* far wrong,” was my somewhat youthful answer.

"Don't you? no more do I. I don't *see* it, and yet I suppose it must be so."

"Why?"

"Well," he answered, "when I see very plainly, as I appear to do to-day, that some other people have made mistakes against themselves; and when I feel very plainly, as I appear to do to-day, that I have made no such mistake, a thought falls down on me like a thunderbolt, that if this were the case, surely something more must and would and should come of it."

"But we all have more light than we use."

"Yes, and that is my answer to myself. And yet, strange to say, when we toil to do the right for God, and pray to Him for more light, we often get instead a sense of His stillness and waiting. Not an atom more certainty to go by, but a warmer and wider sense of His love, and a greater willingness to let Him do as He pleases with this world of His."

He and Tom now agreed to go and look about them in the town; but I felt that I had not seen enough of the cathedral, so I asked Tom to come and fetch me in an hour; and went back to engulf myself again in the stillness of that coloured shade. I had the book of the Abbé to be my interpreter, and sitting down, I opened it at the dedication, which was startling to one so ignorant of all religions but her own.

"A MARIE,

"Mère de Dieu et Dame de Chartres.

"Our fathers have dedicated to you this marvellous basilica, as the Lady of Chartres and 'Tutèle' of their city; suffer, O mighty Queen, that one of your servants may dare to dedicate to you this slight description of their immortal work, the magnificent testimony of their generous and tender devotion towards you."

Guided by this curious book, I went to look at the bas-reliefs on the quire-screen, and especially at that one which records the death of Marie, where, while St. Peter sprinkles her with holy water, and St. John tells his beads, she presents her famous chemise to her young attendant.

This garment, only second in sacredness to the so-called holy coat at Treves, is laid up in the cathedral in a golden *caisse*, the Abbé informing his readers that for six centuries it has been the object of the most fervent devotions of the faithful. Then with indescribable simplicity, to the last degree curious and attractive, he next describes the sculptured scene in which eight angels, "almost trembling with respect," lift the Virgin's body into the tomb; but the Old Testament scenes, in which monks, bound books, knights in armour, and churches appear, are quite as interesting, and he seems, if one may trust his style of description, to find nothing strange in them.

I was delighting in the resplendent loveliness and purity of light and colour that came in through the glorious west window, when the sacristan came up to me again, and remarked that Monsieur and Ma-

demoiselle could not have come on a better day, for there was to be High Mass in the evening; it would be the grandest spectacle of the year, and would close with a procession to the crypt. We should then see the *caisse* in which the sacred relic was kept, four priests would bear it; also we should see the sacred banner of Chartres, with the chemise represented on it: we should acknowledge then that nothing could be more magnificent.

I remained in the cathedral till Tom and Mr. Brandon came for me, and took me to see the children and the sweet, tender old grandmother. She was giving them slices of bread and fruit, and they seemed already quite at home with her. Though she was the wife of an hotel-keeper, her manners were charming, and her thanks for the care we had bestowed on her darlings were more elegant than anything we could say in return.

We had a curious dinner afterwards, and rose from it to go into the fair and see the French soldiers, and the grown-up women riding in merry-go-rounds, and on wooden horses, with all the joyousness of children. Then, when it was nearly dark, we turned up the narrow street that led to the cathedral and entered its great cavernous doors with the crowd that was pouring into them.

We were desirous not to show any disrespect, and yet not to be among the worshippers, so we sat with-

drawn behind a pillar, but where we could see perfectly well. It was a grand thing to see twilight brooding over the crowd below, while lines of sunset yet lingered among the vaulting of the roof and behind the windows, which, growing deeper and dimmer, appeared to recede from us to a greater distance, preserving all the time a solemn splendour, till they melted into the dusk and were gone. We all had chairs, having given two sous each for them, and when two or three lamps were lighted to prevent confusion, there was a sudden clatter and flutter; all the chairs were being turned, a voice behind us caused us also to turn, and some one began to preach. "Behold, my brothers," he began, "we are now at the feet of Mary." As he preached, men on ladders lighted hundreds of little coloured lamps, which were wreathed about the pillars and festooned from pier to pier. We were seated in the wide open nave, but the roof was so lofty that I thought the crowds of people on their chairs, and round the bases of the pillars, only looked like lumps of moss and flowers growing about the roots and stems of enormous trees. The high altar rested against the great gates that shut in the quire, and while the sermon went on the functionaries lighted it up.

Again I felt the contrast between the solemn grand old nave and these paltry prettinesses.

"What does this remind you of?" whispered Tom,

leaning before me to speak to Mr. Brandon. "V.R., V.R., V.R., glittering everywhere. Isn't it just like Regent Street on the Queen's birthday?"

Miss Tott groaned when he said this. "Look at that long procession of splendour," she said; "here come the priests."

What a strange sight when one sees it for the first time, and what a strange sound was the quavering, weak chant, and the slight clatter of the censors as they were swung up smoking among the growing flowers! There was the old archbishop in his golden mitre, and womanly gear reaching down to his shoes, and all stiff with gems and orfèvrerie and lace; then followed troops of ecclesiastics in scarlet and gold, and purple, and green; and then the priests in white; and then numbers of little boys in scarlet clothes and white tunics; while all the time the quavering chant went on, and the restless crowd swayed about, and long lines of delicate smoke followed the boys as they ran in and out, and men went on lighting the lamps, which were now nearly ready.

"Thrift, thrift, Horatio," whispered Tom; "there is very little oil in those lamps: they do well to light them late."

Do let me wonder at it all in peace, was my thought; but now the organ began to play—the grand old organ in the roof that we could not see. First it sent out a few trembling, tender notes, that wandered

away along the upper vaults, or dropped down upon us softly like sighs of angels, then suddenly they were all about us and amongst us, and we rose as if to get nearer to the music, which was pealing out the triumphal beginning of a glorious hymn.

It seemed as if some instinct had drawn us up from our seats; but we had hardly obeyed it when the organ wandered away in unexpected fashion, and we appeared to be floating among strange worlds, and to be taken out among the stars; then in a moment it flew back to its first theme, and burst upon us like musical thunder, "God save the Queen."

It was the Queen of Heaven, who is emphatically queen at Chartres.

"Do you see the cross?" whispered Mr. Brandon.

I looked and saw over the high altar a great cross formed of coloured lamps, and surmounted by a very large letter M, also of lamps. The letter M was resplendent and glorious, so that it appeared to hang suspended in the dark, so dim was the cross beneath it. The lamps had been duly lighted, but they flickered, paled, and some went out, spoiling the symmetry of the device.

"Curious accident," said Mr. Brandon; "it makes me feel quite superstitious. Strange they will not light. The Cross is utterly dimmed here by the glories of Mary."

The sight of that blazing M. and dying fading cross gave me just the feeling he confessed to.

"If I had read such a thing in a book," he went on, "I should have said it was invented for effect; but, look, there it comes; this is what we are here to see."

So we turned, and in the distant gloom we saw that the vast old west doors were slowly swinging open, and I heard, somewhere in the gulf of darkness without, a trembling chant, while all the gorgeously dressed procession went slowly down toward these doors, and the great congregation swaying backward and forward opened for them, leaving a wide aisle; and then was such a bustle, such a moving of chairs, and such a setting of children upon them, that for a few minutes I lost sight of the priests altogether, but by the sound of their voices I perceived that they had gone outside the building.

"They are gone to meet the banner and the relic," said Mr. Brandon; "here it comes."

An endless procession of young girls, and each one with a white muslin veil over her head, and a great candle, thicker than her arm, and towering far above her head. About a hundred girls passed, then came four priests, bearing on poles the golden shrine of the relic, and close behind it came the banner.

I saw a small flag of rich white silk, and on it an ordinary woman's chemise embroidered in red, the

effigy of a common garment of a usual pattern; not, I think, like anything worn of old in the East.

Hundreds more girls followed. They were all gazing at the banner with an expression of love and reverence indescribable, and softly singing one of the litanies of the Virgin.

It was such a strange and pathetic sight that Miss Tott and I both wept. She, because its tender beauty touched her; I, because I could not bear to think of their wasted love. And all the time the Cross flickered and went out, and I caught a petition here and there of their litany to Marie:—

Sainte Mère de Dieu,
Rose Mystérieuse,—priez pour nous.
Étoile du matin,
Refuge des pécheurs,
Reine des Apôtres,—priez pour nous.
Reine des Anges, Sainte Mère de Dieu,
Reine conçue sans péché, priez pour nous.

I had heard before careless prayers, formal prayers, and even the profane prayer of the swearer, but I had never heard anything so pathetic as this prayer, under the waning, flickering Cross, of a devout multitude who did not notice it, and all whose eyes were for the effigy on the banner.

“Did you ever see such a sight as that before?” said Tom, pointing it out to Mr. Brandon.

“No,” he answered; “such sights only appear to new comers.”

The banner was hoisted up and the procession

halted; but in a few minutes I observed in the gloom, which these blinking candles could not dispel, that the crowd, though no doors were open, was rapidly melting away, moving on towards a dim corner, and passing out of sight.

Tom thought they must be going down to the crypt; and we too, when the procession had formed again, followed it on, but a good way off.

We were left nearly alone, most of the lamps were already out, and we groped our way to that corner where was a little door, through which we looked down a long flight of steps to a passage below. The steps were so worn away that we did not descend without difficulty, but once down we got into a lighted aisle. We were underneath the nave, and far beyond we heard the pathetic, unsatisfied chant of the monotonous litany. These vast old vaults were but dimly lighted, and we seemed to thread interminable lengths of them, running against the tombs of abbots, and treading in the dust of kings—no, not their dust, only the dust of their old monuments; for the Virgin is supposed to have an objection to the presence of dead bodies, therefore none are buried here. At length, upon a sudden turn we came upon a great outburst of light, the procession, and all the kneeling crowd! They were at the feet of a coarse wooden image, evidently very old, a frightfully barbarous mother and a still more rudely fashioned child. We stood a good

deal withdrawn that we might not be seen. "How bad the air must be down here," I said to Mr. Brandon; "some of these great candles are actually going out."

"Why," he exclaimed, "you don't surely suppose they are real. You do not take them for wax?"

"They are wax, indeed. I can see it—by their hue; besides, what else can they be?"

"Excuse me, I have seen thousands of them in different parts of the world. They are tin cases, painted to imitate wax, and having a hole at the top to admit two or three inches of rushlight, which is pressed up by a spring. These stingy folks have put in such short bits that they will not last out the ceremony; that is the reason there is such a vile smell of candle-snuff."

What an extraordinary thing this seemed to do, because, as giving candles is a religious act, what was the good of making any better of them in the eyes of mortals, when to the saint it was surely supposed to be evident that they were "dips"?

The kneeling crowd began to shift, then to rise and move, and we were pressed upward with it, and, at last, reached the great, dark nave, through which wandering wafts of damp night-air were sighing. And so we were borne along to the wide west door, but we failed to find Tom and Miss Tott in the crowd, and we walked towards our hotel without them.

"What do you think of it?" asked Mr. Brandon again.

"Oh! it is very surprising; so different from what I expected; so wonderfully grand and barbarously splendid; so simply and heartily idolatrous. As a show it was lovely and pathetic; but it wanted gravity,—the people chattered softly, and the priests wanted dignity."

"Most things French want that," he answered. "Those priests never walk well, and the people were not awed; they were too much amused to give one the idea that they felt they were assisting at a solemn, religious service."

"It is very odd, that, apart from any religious reason, I am deeply disappointed. I expected to see such deep reverence. Do you know I felt afraid to go and see it, lest I should be drawn to it too strongly."

"And now?"

"Now I hardly know what to think! Certainly I am not attracted. Surely it was theatrical, and to a certain extent unreal."

"The music was fine," he answered. "Not so fine as you would have on a high day at Westminster Abbey, or at York, or at Durham (Cathedrals that I happen to know best); but still it was fine. And surely you did not expect English solemnity from a

French priest; and English sobriety from a French crowd?"

"Yes, indeed."

"I have often seen French women praying before some shrine with a most touching expression of reverence and love; but I have not seen elsewhere that hushed and reverent quiet and that tender awe with which an English congregation comes up to receive the Holy Communion."

"I thought to see that in perfection."

"I think you never will, at least I never did. I do not know of any solemnity to match the silence in an English church followed by the low voice of the clergyman when he partakes himself of the sacred elements, before he gives them to the people."

"But I felt that the show was too cheap. Some things meant to be grand were sham."

"They are not so rich as we are."

"No; but with us shabby, old pulpit clothes and pewter communion plate only means that the worshippers are poor, or unobservant; here it means that they are undutiful."

"Many people would have been delighted and astonished with what we have seen. It was, at least, pathetic, though it seems to me that its chief pathos was for us. To me it seemed one of the grandest and most sublime sights I ever beheld, for to all that gorgeous colouring and barbaric adorning, and those

pale trailing drifts of incense smoke, through which one saw the old men's and the children's faces, was added the certainty that not a soul among them was conscious of the tragical withdrawal into darkness of the sacred sign. It was hidden from their eyes."

We turned as he spoke, and looked back at the exquisite spires, and looked earnestly, for this was to be our last view of them. When we reached the hotel we found our boxes already brought down into the courtyard; the carriage was waiting which was to take us to the railway, for we were to return to Havre that very night. Tom and Miss Tott were in it, our bill was paid, and we were soon in our places in the railway carriage, feeling very tired, but too much excited to sleep.

I was sitting lost in thought, and feeling as if in a dream, when we stopped at a station, and Miss Tott, sighing, laid her hand on my arm, and said,—

"You have been gratified, I hope—and you too, Mr. Graham?"

Tom nodded.

"No doubt we have all been interested," said Mr. Brandon; "but no two of us have seen the same thing. You and I have seen what we looked for—a common case; it is often difficult to see anything else. Miss Graham has accomplished it, and seen something startling."

"I have seen something superior to anything I

could have hoped," she answered. "Something far finer than my fondest dream. I saw kneeling faith and adoring love; and those flowers, how lovely they looked in the lamplight. But you, Mr. Brandon, did you, could you see anything different?"

"Yes; there is no use in denying it. I saw lamps that we hire on illumination nights at sixpence a dozen. I heard bad chanting, and I smelt bad oil; but you know the town-clerk at Ephesus said of Paul that he was not a blasphemer of the goddess."

"Oh! what can you mean by such an illusion as that?"

"I am not sure that I know! It only occurred to me that I should like to follow that example."

"But I think the town-clerk lied," observed Tom.

"And I think not. I think that while showing the more excellent way Paul was very careful not to be rude or disrespectful. There is all the grace and courtesy of the East in his speech at Athens."

"And you actually were not impressed?" cried Miss Tott.

"No; but I do not complain. I saw what I looked for, and what I went to see."

"He paid two sous for his chair," said Tom; "and he thought that was what the show was worth."

"But Miss Graham saw something remarkable—something unexpected."

Miss Tott, whose hand still lay on my arm, looked

at me with tender interest, and said with conviction, and also as if she would persuade me to acknowledge my feelings,—

“She was impressed, I am sure. Yes, I saw that she was overpowered.”

“I am sorry,” was my answer; “but how could I help it? I expected to see what you described, but I was obliged to see something more like what Mr. Brandon looked at.”

“You will never buy such a sight for two sous again,” he replied.

CHAPTER II.

“O Kate, nice customs curtesy to great kings.”

Henry the Fifth.

WE dozed when we could that night, but were all very tired when we reached Havre. My uncle had established himself at Wheeler's Hotel, and gave us a grand breakfast there before we went on board, which we did about twelve o'clock, all feeling weary, especially poor Miss Tott, who went to her berth directly, and began to be ill before we were out of the harbour. It rained hard all the afternoon till dinner-time, which was about five o'clock. We, that is Tom and Mr. Brandon and myself, had each taken a book, and pretended to read; but a gentle snore soon told me how Tom was occupied, and Mr. Brandon's book

shortly after fell on the floor with a thump that startled him, and he picked it up, making a remark on the lurching of the vessel, which I roused myself to hear, but presently resigned myself to circumstances, and slept sweetly till Brand came in to make preparations for dinner.

Then we all went to our peculiar dens to dress, and my uncle sent me by Mrs. Brand a pretty brooch that he had bought for me at Havre—an opal set in gold, and surrounded by turquoises. I put on my best dress, and otherwise adorned myself so as to do it honour, and could not help wishing that I had remembered to bring him something from Chartres. I wished it the more, when after dinner Tom produced some eau de Cologne and presented it to him, and Mr. Brandon brought out the neatest of cigar-cases. Dear old man, he was pleased, and, looking with pride at his own choice of the brooch, entered into a long discussion with Mr. Brandon relative to the cost of the said brooch, in which the latter displayed a good deal of knowledge as to the ornaments worn by ladies, and the proper sums to be given for them.

He produced two brooches which he had bought for his sisters—the only presents he was going to take home to his family; for all his effects had gone down in the ship, and they chiefly consisted of natural curiosities. “I felt a sudden wish to come home,” he said, “but I had spent so much money that I could

only return in a sailing vessel, unless I would wait till my stepfather could send out more to me. I did not care to do that, so I sailed from Charleston, and you know the consequences."

In the evening, when lamps were lighted, and I was sitting alone in the chief cabin, writing a letter to my sister, he came in and said abruptly, "I am going to-morrow, Miss Graham."

He sat down near me.

"You know we agreed some time ago that your going was to be a loss to me," I replied, "though now that your arm is so nearly well——"

"Exactly so; but, as I am going, will you accept one of these brooches in memory of the raft and everything else?"

"What!" I exclaimed, "when you expressly told us that you bought them for your sisters?"

We both laughed. "I could give her something else," he said; "but you cannot write while you are talking. I wish, then, you would close your letter-case."

"Why?"

"Because I cannot help seeing your opening words where I sit—'My dearest Amy.'"

I closed the case. "And about these trifles," he continued, "I should be so much flattered if you would choose one."

He had added a third,—it lay beside the brooches on the table, a pretty ring, set with pearls.

“This,” he said, taking it up and laying it on the palm of his hand, “has not the disadvantage of having been chosen for some other person.”

“Ah, you chose it for me, that was kind; but is it the custom for gentlemen to make presents to ladies?”

He looked astonished at my question, which made me feel that he must think it an odd one; then he smiled to himself, and answered after a pause, that it was not the custom, excepting under special circumstances.

Observing that he seemed a little out of countenance, and knowing how ignorant I was, I actually thought I ought to apologise for the implied supposition that he had done what was not customary, and I began to say something of the sort when he hastily checked me.

“You are perfectly right—perfectly. It was only the simplicity of your question that took me by surprise. As a general rule, ladies do not accept presents, nor do men presume to offer them. And yet,” he said, looking at my hand with a sort of regret, “you go wandering about the world so much, that my good stars may never guide me across your wake again; and I thought that perhaps, without presumption, I might offer you this tiny thing to remind

you of a little episode in your life, which will bear reflection."

"It is for the visionary hand, is it not?" I could not help saying, for I had often seen him look at my hands with an interest that nothing else in me appeared to excite.

"Yes," he answered.

"Then I will have the ring. Thank you."

He handed it to me gravely, and I put it on my little finger; after which we began to talk of Chartres and the children and the days we had spent together—pleasant talk which lasted till tea came in, and with it Uncle Rollin and Tom.

We were within four or five knots of Southampton when I went to sleep that night, and the last thing I saw was one of the lights on the Isle of Wight.

Poor Miss Tott insisted on being on deck all night, thinking it was better for her; so I had my cabin to myself, and had just finished dressing the next morning, when Tom knocked at the door, and I called him in.

He had a fine bunch of flowers in his hand, and gave them to me.

"Well, Brandon's off," he said. "I went on shore with him, and took leave of him."

"Mr. Brandon gone?" I exclaimed.

"Yes," said Tom, looking a little disconcerted, "and I bought you these in the market."

"Gone without wishing me good-bye?"

"How could he do that when he left before you were awake?"

"Why did he leave, then, before I was awake? I think it was very strange—very. Yes, I think it was very rude of him."

"You seem to make the matter of great importance," he muttered. "The fact is I was obliged to land early myself, and I told him I was sure you would be far from wishing him to stay behind on purpose to take leave of you (he has not seen his stepfather for nearly two years). So on that assurance he was glad to leave a message and go."

"I should have been sorry if he had stayed out of mere civility to——"

"So I said," interrupted Tom.

"Civility to me; but most people would not have wished to do such a thing."

"You need not be so warm, Dorothea; it was not all my doing, though I admit that I thought it a good arrangement."

"Indeed, and why?"

"Well, if you must know, I wished to spare you from betraying a degree of interest which he would not know what to do with, and does not reciprocate."

"Tom!" I spoke vehemently; I was so astonished and so indignant.

"And it seems," continued Tom, who then looked

uncomfortable—"it seems that I was right, for you make the fellow's going of vast consequence."

"Tom, will you look at me?"

I was so angry that I could not bear him to keep turning away his face, and my whole nature was roused to assert itself against his strange interference.

He brought his eyes to meet mine. "Come," he said, "if you really do not care for Brandon, there is no harm done."

"Yes, there is. You speak as if I had really—as if I had actually behaved with unlady-like—I mean, with unwomanly forwardness."

"I have no such thought: I only know that you take an interest in him."

"Of course, I do; I ought, and shall. Who ever heard of that being made a fault?"

"What business had he," said Tom, "to tell me all about his income, and say that he found it abundant so long as he did not want to marry, and he thought a man was much freer and happier single?"

"I dare say it came out in the ordinary course of conversation."

"But why care so much about the matter?" repeated Tom.

"I care that you should mistake me so thoroughly, and that you should think you have a right to interfere. I do not care that Mr. Brandon is gone without shaking hands with me, now I know that you contrived it."

"An elder brother is generally supposed to have some rights."

"Oh! Tom, you were older than I long ago! but I am a woman now, and you are but a youth."

"Very well, then," murmured Tom, still crest-fallen and abashed; "if you are neither in love with him, nor angry at his manner of going, we had better drop the subject."

"In love!" I repeated with scorn. "He never paid me the slightest attention."

I thought I had answered him, but he replied,—

"What has that to do with it? Besides, what is attention?"

I was a little posed, never having received any, or seen any paid; but I could not appear so to Tom, so I said that it was being absorbed in watchful observance and interest in another person.

"Then Brandon paid none. (I'll put those flowers in water, or your warm hand will fade them.) Then, he or she who pays attention may love its object, or may not (decidedly may not); for I have seen some paid which" (he poured water into my fixed vase, and put the flowers in it)—"which I am expressly told implied only a natural and proper degree of interest. There, if you will change the water daily, they will last some time."

He went out, quietly shutting the door behind him, while I stood stockstill in a whirl of agitation, with

which mingled some fear lest Mr. Brandon might have guessed his reason for proposing to dispense with a leave-taking, and a little regret at this unceremonious departure.

It was true certainly that he interested me, but so he did others. Uncle Rollin had taken to him from the first. Tom liked to hear him talk. Mrs. Brand was his open admirer; why then all this alarm because he excited the same feeling, and none other, in my mind? At first, when left alone that fine morning, I felt frightened, thinking that I must have behaved foolishly; but more mature reflection made me certain of the contrary, and, remembering Miss Tott's presence in the yacht, I hastened in to breakfast, eyes sparkling with the remains of excitement, head a little higher than usual, and mind bent on proving that my spirits were far from depressed by the departure of our guest.

Though we were within fifty yards of the pier-head, and in perfectly still water, Miss Tott would not venture below; so when I had seen her, pale but hungry, enjoying a substantial breakfast under Mrs. Brand's auspices, I began my own.

Uncle Rollin complimented me on my appearance almost as soon as he came in. "Such a colour in your cheeks, my dear! The sea suits her, doesn't it, Tom? One would hardly know her for the little white-faced thing that came on board from Ipswich.

Hungry this morning, eh? that's well. And so Brandon's gone—a good fellow, a fine fellow; never sailed with a better."

"No, uncle; but you are not sorry to be alone, I dare say."

"I don't say that exactly. I did not at all mind him; he never interfered with my comfort."

"But now he is gone, can't I have my lessons more regularly?"

"Ay, to be sure, to be sure; I'll give you one directly after prayers."

I took my lesson; it lasted only an hour, but I felt as if it never would be over. At last I was released and went quickly into my cabin, almost tumbling over Tom, who was sitting in the doorway. He caught me in his arms, and held me while he pushed the door to with his foot, and then he kissed me and said, "You're not angry, Dorothea!"

"I have been angry."

"You are not now; I did not mean any harm."

"I don't think I am—particularly angry."

"Well, I am sorry; give me a kiss. I really am sorry."

So I kissed him, and we were reconciled; but, alas! sad mischance, no sooner had he left me alone than this new turn of affairs utterly subdued me. I felt how cross I had been to Tom. His seeking a reconciliation of his own accord softened me. Even then I

had many regrets about him, and some fears for his future; and now he was gentle and anxious to conciliate. So I was touched, and began to shed tears. I cried and sobbed too, partly at Tom's humility, but partly because I was vexed with Mr. Brandon, and also sorry that I should never see him again.

Well, it was a great pity, but I could not help it. I had cried myself happier again, dried my eyes, and reached that stage of return to common feelings when one goes to the glass to see how red one's eyes are, when Tom knocked again, and came in exclaiming, "Oh, Dorothea!——but what's the matter? You've been crying."

I did not say anything.

"Could anything be more unlucky? Here is Brandon come on board again. The fact is he said he should."

"Oh, I cannot see him now, Tom; I cannot possibly. He would see that I have been crying. Oh, do devise some excuse."

"You won't see him. Oh, Dolly, you must; it would look so odd. What is to be done? it's all my fault."

"He must be asked to stay to luncheon."

Tom said he would go and press him to stay, but he came back saying that it could not be done; Brandon had brought his stepfather on board, and could only stay a quarter of an hour.

While he was away on his errand I had felt that, after all Tom had said, I could not possibly let Mr. Brandon see the least appearance of regret in my manner, lest he should attribute it to sorrow at his departure; I thought sincerely enough that I would much rather not see him at all than be seen with the traces of tears on my face, and I actually trembled at the notion of encountering him. I had no veil but the one that I had laid over the dead baby; so when Tom said I must come on deck, I snatched up a bonnet (there was some shade in a bonnet then), Tom put a scarf on for me, and I had a brown parasol.

He came on deck with me and whispered, "All right, hold the parasol well over you."

I saw somebody's legs, and a voice belonging to them said, "Miss Graham, I am glad to see you again."

I shook hands mechanically, but kept the fringe of my parasol fluttering over my eyes till I found that an introduction was going on between me and somebody else. "Allow me—my father." Now I was obliged to look up, and I saw a very aged gentleman standing beside him, a most venerable man with snowy hair. He took off his hat and paid me some trifling compliment, then he told me he had come down to Southampton to see his son, who had written him word when to expect him.

I said, "I am sorry my uncle is not on board."

"I regret it much," he replied. "I should have liked to thank him for his goodness and his hospitality; but I hope to see him and you also, lieutenant (addressing Tom), at my house. My daughter and Brandon's sisters will be most happy, most proud to make your acquaintance."

Such a charming old man I have seldom seen: he was half a head taller than his son, who was little above the middle height; and as he stooped towards me and paid his compliments, then turning, laid his hand lightly on the shoulder from which a sling for the injured arm depended, there was a grace and suavity in his manner, a cordial affection in his expression of gladness at having him home again that I could not admire enough.

As he talked Mr. Brandon regarded him with satisfaction, and I thought it was evident that he had come on board, not only that his father might express his obligations to my uncle, but that he might show us a relation of whom he was evidently so proud.

He seemed to be about eighty years of age, had a radiant smile, and could attract everybody. Mrs. Brand was charmed; the sailors obviously revered his old white head that towered so much above theirs.

He went over the yacht with Tom and his attentive son, and I, meanwhile, stood gazing towards Southampton, watching the green weeds which the rising tide was slowly washing backwards and forwards, but

not thinking of them. No; my thoughts were very uncomfortable. I was ill at ease, for when my eyes had met Mr. Brandon's, an intelligent look had leaped out of his: he saw, I knew he saw, that I had been shedding tears, and his cordial manner had changed instantly to one of restraint and even of embarrassment.

So I gazed over the vessel's side at the old wall of Southampton, and the weed and the Jersey steamer, just in, and letting off her steam in shrill jerks of sound.

At last Mr. Brandon came up the companion, stepped to my side, and lifted his hat.

"We are going now, Miss Graham. Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

"What shall I wish you? Another patient, I think, since you are so skilful."

"What, another! when I have found the present one quite beyond my management."

"I wish, then, that the next may be less refractory."

"In that case I may echo the wish."

"And less troublesome, and *as* grateful."

"I must not expect such a paragon. Good-bye; a pleasant journey."

"And if, when he goes away, he gives you a ring, don't wear it."

"Why not?"

“Because it would be very unfair, if you *wore that fellow’s ring, and not mine.*”

He laughed, and glanced at my hand; true enough, his ring was not there, and I felt tempted to tell him that I was wearing it, notwithstanding, for it was in the little locket round my neck; but I resisted the temptation, and now the aged stepfather was making his adieux, and so with smiles and mutual compliments, offers of hospitality, jokes, and thanks we all parted.

“My uncle will be very thankful to have missed all this gratitude,” said Tom, looking after them as they kissed their hands in the boat. “How that fine old fellow talked—as if Brandon was anything better than another father’s son. Well, Dorothea, your eyes are tolerable now: shall we go ashore, order a fly, and take a drive among the fields?”

I knew he proposed this for my amusement, and I had been quite long enough at sea to think of fields with delight, so I agreed; and when we had taken leave of Miss Tott, who was going to town by the next train, we set forth, and he was so affectionate and kind all that day that I forgave him over and over again, for what he had said in the morning. Besides I had seen Mr. Brandon; his joyous laugh, and air of pretended malice when he talked of *that fellow’s ring*, had done me good, and restored my self-respect; for now I thought, though he saw tears, he had also seen

that I was not wearing his present, and my apparent carelessness of it has not hurt him—only amused him.

CHAPTER III.

“But to me a modest woman, dressed out in all her finery, is the most tremendous object of the whole creation.”—*Goldsmith*.

AFTER dinner I generally made a point of retiring to my cabin as to a drawing-room, while Uncle Rollin and Tom sat over their wine. That night they sent Mrs. Brand to fetch me back, saying that it was dull for me to sit alone.

It had been raining, the deck was damp and cheerless, so they had settled themselves below for the evening, and I was glad to obey the summons and join them. They were deep in talk, Tom explaining, my uncle continually falling into mistakes. The subject of the discussion was Mr. Brandon and his family.

“The old man,” Tom said, “is Brandon’s step-father.”

“Why, I thought you said he was the father of that widow lady whom Brandon spoke of.”

“So I did, sir, but not by the same mother.”

“Well, I cannot make it out. I hardly see how the second wife could have married three times in the course of so few years.”

“I’ll just explain it to you as Brandon did to me. His mother, then quite a young woman, married a Mr.

Brandon, who did not live till this son was born. Mr. Mortimer was her guardian, and is Brandon's trustee as well as his stepfather. Well, when she had been a widow two years, she married a Mr. Grant, a Scotch minister, and they had three daughters, one of whom is married and gone to India. This Mr. Grant died when his wife was about thirty, and Brandon was about seven years old."

"Well, that was about twenty years ago."

"Twenty-one years ago. Then in due time she married this fine old man. I suppose he was about sixty—nearly twice her age—and they had one son. So, you see, Brandon, the Grants, and young Mortimer are all related. What you were confused about was the daughter of the old man by his former marriage, for he was a widower. She, you know, is only related to the young son, but they all call her sister, by way of respect, I suppose. She is between fifty and sixty."

"What, four families, and all live together?"

"So it seems; but in point of numbers it is not at all an overwhelming household."

"It's not the number, boy, but the quarrelling."

"They don't seem to quarrel, though the mother is dead. Mr. Mortimer is fond of his step-children. He must be a most amiable old fellow, I am sure. Brandon says he never saw him till after the wedding, when he patted him on the head and gave him a

sovereign. That, running off to spend it, he met some gipsies in a lane and showed it to them, whereupon they persuaded him to buy a young donkey of them with it. He said he rode the miserable little beast home, and, being afraid it would be taken from him, actually managed to get it up the back stairs without being observed, and secreted it in a light closet in his bed-room. The circumstance was not discovered till the next morning, when the bride and bridegroom were awoke by its tremendous braying. He was delighted at his mother's marriage."

"Odd, for he knew already what a stepfather was."

"But his experience of stepfathers seems to have been peculiar, for when I asked him if he remembered Grant, he said, 'Yes, he used to make Grant rig ships for him, and play with him when his mother was ill; in return for which he was expected to learn hymns and come into the study to say his prayers.'"

So the conversation ended. I have often felt pleasure in hearing anecdotes about the childhood of people whom I cared for and looked up to. One sees them thus under a new aspect, and feels a kind of tenderness towards them, as they were in those far-off days. I felt it then towards that little curly-headed urchin at his pranks; but when Uncle Rollin said, "Deep in thought, Dorothea? What are you musing about?" I was startled, and could not reply, "I was

thinking about Mr. Brandon," for Tom had made it awkward for me even to mention his name. There was the real pity. He had put thoughts into my head that teased me. I did not like to say Mr. Brandon had given me a ring, lest there should be some mistake about it; and so I hid it, and it made me uncomfortable and conscious whenever he was mentioned.

I did not like to speak of him as I did of Miss Tott and the children; the consequence was that I thought of him far more than I should have done otherwise, and made a kind of hero of him in my mind, towards whom I felt a certain growing enthusiasm, which affected my imagination, but, so far from making me wish to see him again, kept me keenly anxious to remain at a distance. A sort of girlish shyness made me think of him as a superior being. My feeling was precisely that which familiarity would have melted away, and if I had even talked about him the halo that surrounded him would have faded. But now, when the sea was rough and I had no book, when it rained and I could not go on deck, when the weather was calm and I sat in the place where I had talked to him, I was obliged to torment myself with troublesome, teasing doubts and fears as to whether he might have fancied, as Tom did, that I had given away my heart to him, or that I had not treated him with enough reserve.

This went on for some time, and we cruised about here

and there. My uncle only cared to be afloat, and Tom loved desolate places. He liked to cruise in little lonely creeks, among rocky islets—places where gulls bring up their families, and puffins sit, and penguins live and stare out foolishly at intruders.

I liked this too, when I could land, but that was not often, for my uncle loved to give rocks a wide berth, and I did not like to leave the yacht and go ashore in a boat; but sometimes we used to lie in some snug little harbour, then I was happy.

We sailed up north, and I saw the shoals of herrings come down. Sometimes we got into the midst of one, and I saw them turn up their silvery sides and jostle one another, for they seemed to swim in several layers, and so thickly imbedded that the sea looked a little higher where they were, as if they lifted the water on their backs.

I reared and trained many young sea birds,—nearly twenty of them followed the yacht, and used to roost in the rigging. They would come down at my call to be fed, and when I would let them they would sit on my knee while I read, or perch on my head and shoulders.

We had a delightful yachting tour all by the beautiful west coast of Ireland. I had always been accustomed to look upon this world as consisting of certain countries bordered by the sea; now I began to think of it as a globe of water. I no longer thought of the

shapes of continents, but of the shapes of the seas in which they lay. I could not help this. I began to attach great importance to places that had fine harbours; islands were no good unless there was safe anchorage round them; rivers were delightful because we could sail up them. I soon began to know what rivers could take us on their bosoms, and how far we could go. Sometimes, when I came to a bridge and a town, it appeared surprising to me that so many people could live contentedly on shore; and, after a few days spent in looking about me, I was generally glad to sail again.

Sometimes at the towns on the coast-guard stations old naval officers and young ones came on board, and were made much of. If they were very old friends, my uncle sometimes returned their visits. Tom often did, and not unfrequently one or two would come on board for a few days; but we did not have the Mom-
pessons,—one of their children was ill, and they put off their visit indefinitely.

At last, about the middle of September, after loading ourselves with everything we could possibly want, and after many presents from my uncle to me, of ribbons, laces, shawls, gloves, scarves, silks, and other most useless adornments as I then thought them, we set sail for a winter cruise to the West Indies, and after that I was told I should see Rio.

I was greatly delighted, and would fain have flung every scrap of finery into boxes and there left it till

I landed; but Mrs. Brand, as she sat in my cabin at work on the bows of a handsome sash, said to me, rather pointedly, when I entered one afternoon, "Dear me, ma'am, to think of your putting on that ugly 'waterproof.'"

"Ugly is it?" I answered; and I turned my head over my shoulder, for I knew it was short, and that it showed the flounces of my gown beneath it. "Well," I continued, "I can't always be thinking of my dress."

"Can't you, ma'am?" she answered, quietly. "Well, it's lucky then, that in general you don't object to my thinking of it for you."

She took off my cloak, for it was wet; and then, as I made no objection, she tried the sash against my waist.

"You can't go on deck again," she said; "and as it only wants an hour to dinner-time, it would be a good thing if you was to let me dress you."

"Very well," I answered, for I was a little struck by her manner; and I stood quite still while she took out various things, and considering what would look well together, proceeded to put them on.

"You scarcely ever look at yourself in the glass, ma'am," she presently said.

"There is no occasion," I answered, laughing. "You take good care that I shall never leave your hands till I am perfectly neat and nice!"

"Most young ladies," she answered, a little re-

proachfully, "look at themselves very frequent! Master, he was saying, only yesterday, to Mr. Graham, that you were improved to that degree, since you came on board, nobody ever could know you."

"Do *you* think it is so?" I inquired with pleasure.

"Of course," she answered; "you were so pale then. Not but what I liked the looks of you from the first. I thought," she continued, looking at me affectionately,—*"I thought you had the innocentest face anybody ever saw."*

"You mean a baby face, don't you?"

She laughed because I did; but she returned to the attack.

"And they're quite proud of your appearance. Both the gentlemen are. You look so graceful and slender, specially when you're well dressed." And so she went on, "I should take a world of pains, if I were you, ma'am, to have them always proud of me, and be as particular every day as if there was to be ever so many strangers to dinner. You've got such dozens upon dozens of light kid gloves, why shouldn't you wear 'em in the evening; you've got such laces, such sashes, and, I don't know what. Dear me, make yourself a charming young lady with it all, or else *after this one cruise, you may depend on it, you won't stay on board long.*"

She spoke with slow impressiveness; and I was so certain she had good ground for what she said that

her words fell on me like a thunderbolt. I knew my being on board was a great pleasure to her. I knew that many things were said before her and Brand that were never said before me; and I resolved, there and then, to follow her advice to the utmost. So, when she had dressed me in a lilac silk petticoat, with an embroidered white dress over it, and when she had given me a pair of lilac gloves of a still paler tint, I went up to the glass, thankfully acknowledged a great improvement, and looked at myself with much attention.

“Well, ma’am” she inquired,—“don’t look so grave, —will it do?”

The gown had a light, transparent body, and I took courage; for I was sure I had never looked so well in my life.

“I think it wants a little gold about it,” I replied; and she brought out a gold necklace that Tom had given me, and a gold bracelet. So I put on my gloves, and she said—

“Now don’t be downhearted, ma’am; but just you give yourself all the airs that ever you can!”

I turned to kiss her; but I was rather in dismay, and as I came floating into the chief cabin, with my delicate skirts behind me, I felt myself blush with shyness and discomfort.

But some people are destined to find out things and others to act upon them. To describe the change in my uncle’s manner, and Tom’s too, would be quite

impossible! And what amused me most, when I could dare to think of it, was that they were perfectly unconscious, both of the change and the cause of it.

No, I never despised my fine array any more. I saw at once how much in their opinion it did for me, and though I caught sight of myself several times that evening in the different glasses, and thought I looked rather too much like a dressed-up flaxen-haired doll, I drew my long dress after me with all gravity, and when my uncle asked me to play on my new piano that he had bought for me, and which I had far too much neglected, I rose, and Tom opening it for me, I forebore to thank him, but took the attention as a matter of course, which I thought would have a good effect, and it had.

I never once again went on deck when it rained or blew so hard that I could not be well dressed; and I had frequent consultations with Mrs. Brand as to what I looked best in. It appeared from various little things she said, that I had already been in danger of being placed with a family on shore, and I found that it was not my dear old uncle who felt that the yacht was an unfit place for me, but this brother whom I so much loved.

I utterly forgot Mr. Brandon in my desire to make myself agreeable and ornamental. Tom was so fond of seeing pretty things about him, and graceful ways, that I could almost always tell whether he liked my

dress or not; and Mrs. Brand was so clever, that there was no need for me to weary him by want of variety.

So I dressed to please my old uncle and my young brother; I found out, with Mrs. Brand's help, what was becoming; and, strange to say, my lot has been so cast, that it has been my duty as well as my interest to study the art of dress ever since.

That was a delightful winter; but Tom has published an account of those travels, and if I were to write of them they would fill volumes. We went gliding about, first among the West Indian Islands,—left our own bare green levels with their low-lying broidery of meadow flowers, and went sliding down over the polished water, to the middle of the world; then, while all the top of it was white, and all its best things were neatly put away, and covered up till spring under the snow, we hung about in little land-locked coves, with polished azure floors, and cliffs as pale as cinnamon, and sometimes stole into the edges of the steaming forests, and saw dangerous wedges from the sun shoot straight in like gold thunderbolts, and the sleepy cayman sweltering in their lukewarm swamps would snap at them, and stretch their yawning jaws, as if to take them in.

We fluttered about here and there, from continent to island; we treated all with great respect; it did not belong to us who lived on the edge and upper fringes

of the earth, and there was danger in the beauty and beauty in the danger.

Then it was that after awhile I began to be sure that the world was yet young; she was a wild thing that God and His Time had only half tamed; and sometimes by day and always by night, I derived from her ways and the sleep that was on her a consciousness of her life as a whole.

For after sunset, till about midnight, it would often seem that she was slumbering while yet everything on her that had life was restless and stirred, and came out to drink; and they called and cried to one another and to their Maker (for they are not so unconscious of God as men are,—at least it has long appeared so to me,—but they do not love Him as many of us do), and some of them seemed to cry to Him defiantly, and others grumbled and complained.

Then about the dead middle of the night, in some parts of the tropical zones, but not in all, there would come a pause, as if the living creatures were appeased and at rest, and thereupon the dark beautiful world would wake up, and while the stars in their courses made it plain to me how fast she was rolling, a sort of murmur would sound, whether from within and sent up from her mighty heart, or from without and borne by the multitudes of the waves, I cannot tell; but it is not to be forgotten when once it has been

heard, and it seemed like a message sent up into the heaven to remind her Maker, how he had held her in hand very long, and sent her on very fast, and she was not wearied, but altogether amazed, at the greatness of the way. I was so strangely impressed with these sensations, that I often came up in the night, and sometimes Tom—who saw how awful and tender the night-time seemed to me—would call me when there was anything more than usually beautiful to be seen. It was always the same, there was a message, and it was going up to God. Sometimes when I slept after such a midnight watching, I have dreamed that I heard an answer, “It was not long, it was only *a very little while* that she had rolled. It was not far—but *a very little way*.”

While we remained, which we did all the winter in the glorious heat, Tom was sometimes very genial, and generally he was calm; but as we gradually drew up homeward again, I observed the same silent brooding of thought in his manner that had struck me so much months before. Every day as we came up northwards, it fell down over him. He was very dull—almost spiritless. Oh, how different from that Snap whom once I had played with; he was altered even since I had come on board, more silent and more absent. I could now hardly recognise a trace of what he had been in his early boyhood, and his evident avoidance of all confidential talk, his dislike of being alone with

me, and his restlessness, made me often seriously afraid that something—I knew not what—was impending.

I had been greatly struck with his silence and alteration of character when first I left school, but I had made myself believe that he felt shy in my company, on account of our having been parted so long.

Afterwards, when I saw how listless he was, and then, that when we were at Southampton, there was a sort of unnatural eagerness about him, I was compelled to give up that fancy; the change had nothing to do with me, I could neither influence him nor interest him, I must be content to talk to him and play to him when he wished it. I must take him as I found him.

When we got to Southampton, and sent for our letters to the hotel where they were always directed, I knew—or at least felt—that there would be none for me. I had no correspondents. My father never wrote. Amy only wrote twice a year. So I went forth with Mrs. Brand to take a walk, and I thought I had never seen anything so lovely as the airs the daisies were giving themselves, and the golden celandines, that April morning,—so small and so pleased to show themselves. How different from the great trailing passion-flowers I had come from! creatures obviously so indifferent who looked at them. The whole of these northern flowers looked so modest, and yet so conscious of man. I gathered a few daisies, and as I came

back to our sitting-room at the hotel, Uncle Rollin tossed me a letter, saying,

“There, Dorothea, you may do as you like, but I shall decline, of course.”

It was a letter from Mr. Mortimer, and contained a pressing invitation to him, Tom, and myself to come and stay with him and his family. The country, he said, was looking beautifully, the weather was fine; his son was impatient to renew his acquaintance with Tom; his daughters longed to make mine, &c., &c.

“Do you wish to go?”

I could not tell; I had been away so long that I felt as if I should be awkward and shy, and I faltered and said that I had never paid a visit in my life, and that this one seemed formidable.

“You will want some new gowns,” said Tom, who now entered, and evidently knew the contents of the letter.

The notion of a visit in the country among green hills, fields, and hedges, away from the sound of the sea, and where I might ramble far and wide, was delightful to my yearning heart; but then, the conversation with Tom, and Mr. Brandon’s look when he saw my red eyes, came into my mind, and a kind of sensitive pride and shame kept me silent.

“You cannot hesitate, of course, Dorothea,” said Tom, “and I shall go certainly; I never argued in my

life so much as I did with that fellow, and I should like to have it out with him if I could."

"If she prefers to stay she may," observed Uncle Rollin.

But no, I did not prefer it; the yacht was calm, and safe, and quiet, and this visit, I knew, would lift me into a different world. I was very much excited, even at the thought of it, and Mr. Brandon's face and voice, which I had lost from me, and almost for a time forgotten, seemed to come near to me again now that I was approaching his home, and make me feel awkward and shy; but I longed for the land, so I told Tom I would accept the invitation. During the tropical winter, delightful as I had found its splendid light, colour, and heat, I had often felt an extraordinary pining for the green grass of my own country, and for the cheerful voices of my own country folk. I wanted to use my tongue, my hands, to be busy, even to be teased; also, to be in a house!

I thought of a landsman's life with romantic interest; I had visions moreover of Christmas gatherings, things which I had actually never seen, and would often dream that I was digging, or that I was gathering buttercups, or that I was walking to a village church, and could hear the bells ring. Yet I did not like to leave the yacht, because it was my home, nor Uncle Rollin, because he and I suited each other so well. I was getting on with my navigation, too, and he was

so fond of me. Yet it made me far more content to go that I was to have Mrs. Brand with me; whatever I might fear as to his leaving me with some motherly woman in a sea-port, I knew he would never leave her behind; she and Brand were necessary to his comfort; so I felt sure that however long we stayed he would wait for us, and set about my preparations for the visit with some security of heart.

As usual he heaped a quantity of finery on me, and showed an unaccountable desire that I should do him credit as far as all my habiliments were concerned. I took several walks with him, during which we inspected the outside of shop windows, and a large assortment of things went with me, which I resolved should never see the light unless I found the family just the very reverse of the sort of people I expected.

I have so many journeys to describe, my life has been so much spent in travelling, that I shall say nothing of this one, but pass on to the moment when Tom and I took leave of Uncle Rollin, and got into a railway carriage in a pouring rain.

We spent four hours in the train. I shall never forget what happy hours they were. I quite forgot Mr. Brandon and all the strangers I was going to, for there were real English cottages to see, and homely farm-yards, with poultry, cattle, trees just breaking into

leaf, fallows soaked with spring rain, lambs,—all common things,—but to me they were opening paradise.

The weather grew fine, and then sunny, as we advanced westward. The little station we were bound for appeared at last, the train stopped, and in the balmy delightful air I smelt the perfume of violets.

“There’s Brandon,” exclaimed Tom, “and a great tall boy, and two ladies.”

We were soon out of the carriage; introductions were going on, laughter and welcome. A tall girl was introduced as “my sister, Miss Grant,” and another as “my sister Elizabeth,” and the youth as “my brother Valentine.” This last was a remarkably fine young fellow, with light-brown eyes, a smiling face, and a cracked voice. A countrified servant was soon dragging out our luggage under Mrs. Brand’s superintendence, and while we waited, my eyes in spite of myself were drawn to a bunch of primroses that one of the girls held. I pretended not to care for them, but could not help taking another and another look, whereupon the cracked voice spoke in my behalf.

“Lou, Miss Graham wants your primroses.”

The tall boy took them from her without ceremony, and gave them to me. “Would you like some violets?” he continued; “this is a very *violety* place.”

“Yes, indeed, I should.”

“Ah! I thought so. Lou?”

“Yes.”

“Keep up Miss Graham’s spirits while I’m gone, by timely allusions to her own demesne; talk about shell-fish, the grampus, and anything else that’s cheerful and salt.”

By this time the train had gone on, and Mrs. Brand, looking as if she was going to be led to immediate execution, was sitting still while the luggage was deposited in a cart, by the thin old servant, who wore a suit of drab. I was obliged to leave her to herself; and Mr. Brandon put me into a large heavy old carriage which was waiting. The two girls followed, and then he said he should wait behind to bring an old Scotch aunt, who was coming in a few minutes by a train from the west. Tom declared his intention of remaining behind also; and at the last minute before we started, Valentine came up without his cap, which was full of violets, white and blue, and plenty of wet green leaves.

“Now what do you mean by this imprudence,” said his brother, “when your voice is cracked in three places already?”

As if that was a sufficient answer, Valentine replied that the flowers were for me, and he insisted on getting inside; where he helped me to make them up into a large bunch, while we drove slowly on through a country lane.

I felt almost too happy to speak, the scent of the

flowers was so sweet, and the green hedges, with their half-opened leaves, were so fair.

I looked out and saw daffodils hanging their yellow heads in the warm air; rooks were sailing and cawing over a group of elms, under which we were passing.

"Romantic, isn't it?" said Valentine, again coming near to my thought.

After the rain there was a delightful smell of fresh earth. I made some remark about it, and he replied: "We call that clay. Ruts a foot deep. Lou, I say, there are some goslings. I know Miss Graham wants some goslings."

He stopped the carriage and got out. We were passing through a little wood; I saw wild anemones, and heard birds piping on the boughs; while the delicate sunshine of the north was sifting through them, and dropping about on the grass as lightly as if it felt that it was taking a liberty. Down in a hollow, gleaming white in the creases between cushions of moss, I saw wandering patches of snow, for the spring had been late, and warm weather had come on suddenly.

The Miss Grants, now left alone with me, made a few remarks, which I answered mechanically; while with eyes and ears I took in the delightsomeness of my home.

Presently Valentine returned, with some twigs of willow covered with downy catkins.

"Called goslings by the native children," he ob-

served, as he got in; "for this is an inhabited island. Do you see that red erection, with a green door?"

"Yes, certainly."

"That is one of the houses of the native population; places where, as you would say, they 'turn in;' but where, as we say, they 'hang out.' Liz, I know by the look of you that you're going to speak. There's no need."

"Really, Val," exclaimed the sister, "you must not be so impertinent."

"You don't understand the nautical temper. I ought to do. Haven't I got up the names of no end of ropes and spars? Don't I know all about the Gulf Stream? Why, I've studied tonnage and pennons, and stores, that I might meet her in her own element; but now she has run aground I find I'm cut adrift, for her thoughts are set upon dirt and weeds. You like me, don't you, Miss Graham?"

"Very much, indeed."

"Ah, I told you so, Lou. There's another cottage. Now you wouldn't have found out, unless I told you, that I helped to paint that door. When I was young—youngish—I was very fond of paint."

"You were about seven years old," said Liz.

"Yes," replied Valentine. "Our gardener once lived there, and when he went away, St. George got papa to let him whitewash the inside himself, for his own pleasure. I helped, of course; and then he painted

it up. And I remember to this day what joy it was to hear the slap of the brush upon the wood! We laid out the garden, too; then we built a pig-stye. Papa and mamma used to come down every day to look at us. I helped, as well as I could; and it was very good fun. You see that donkey-shed. St. George built that, too; but I fell off it and broke my arm."

"Is St. George a bricklayer?"

"To think of your not knowing! Why, we call Giles so because mamma did. Now we are coming to a turn in the lane, and you will see our house—my father's house—described in 'The County Guide-Book' as 'the modest but substantial residence of Daniel Mortimer, Esq., Justice of the Peace, with one long wing.'"

"Which has the wing?"

"You may judge of that when you have seen Daniel Mortimer, Esq., and his modest residence; but I thought you had seen my father. Haven't you?"

"Yes; I shall not easily forget him."

"Ah! everyone says I'm my father's own son; and that's more than Giles can say,—or, indeed, others who shall be nameless. Liz and Lou look very prim just now; but you should see them on Sunday morning, quarrelling as to whose turn it is to walk to church with papa. That's a painful spectacle."

Liz and Lou did not seem in the least to resent

this speech, but sat back in the carriage, opposite one another, calmly and idly good-humoured. Neither was pretty; but both were rather attractive. They were a good deal alike—being tall, of full figure, hair brown, and falling in natural curls, and faces rather broad.

They had brown eyes, but here the resemblance between them ceased, for Lou had a good set of teeth and a well-formed mouth, and was fair; but Liz had prominent teeth, and what is sometimes called a muddy complexion.

They now pointed out a good-sized square house as their home; it was of red brick, stood in pleasant grounds, and had some fine beech-trees about it.

In five minutes we had stopped at the door, and Mr. Mortimer's white head appeared. He handed me out, and took me into a hall paved with blue and white stone, and hung with fishing-rods and guns.

He took me through it into a small room, where sat a lady, with her feet on the fender, reading a novel. This, I found, was his widowed daughter, Mrs. Henfrey. A tiresome person I then thought her, for she made me sit by the fire, insisting languidly that I must be cold, and mildly positive that I was dreadfully fatigued.

In the meantime the two girls and Valentine, having done their duty by me in bringing me home, declared that they positively must go and meet Aunt

Christie; and they set off across the fields, being plainly visible from the window where I sat.

I wished I was with them.

CHAPTER IV.

"It was a hairy oubit, sae proud he crept alang,
A feckless hairy oubit, and merrily he sang:
'My Minnie bids me bide at hame until I get my wings;
I'll show her soon my soul's aboon the warks o' creeping things.'"
Kingsley.

I WAS left with Mrs. Henfrey for a quarter of an hour, and shot glances now and then through the window at an old-fashioned garden full of gravel walks and formal beds, in which grew patches of red and white and blue hyacinths, and crown imperial lilies, and jonquils, and delightful brown wallflowers and lilac primroses.

After this, Lou and Liz, Tom, Mr. Brandon, and Valentine, all came in together, bearing with them a tall, bony Scotch woman, who was very much blowzed, and rather muddy, from having tramped through the woods with them, but she was in as high spirits as any of them, and the noise and cheerful chattering they all made delighted me and made my heart dance. They were very hungry, they said, and it was long past lunch time, so the old Scotch lady and I were hurried upstairs to divest ourselves of our travelling gear, and then we were taken into a large dining-room with sash windows and heavy red curtains, a wide fireplace, and a somewhat faded Turkey carpet.

Everything was different from my expectations, but nothing was so different as Mr. Brandon; and I had become so accustomed to my uncle's exceeding shyness, the amount of attendance with which he surrounded himself, and the gilded richness and over-polish and luxury of all the fittings in the yacht, that there was something very delightful to me in the unconscious ease of everybody about me, the absence of servants, and the comfortable old furniture, that looked as if it had been unchanged for years.

"What interests you, Miss Graham?" asked Valentine.

What most interested me was to find Tom already talking freely to Aunt Christie, who sat by him bolt upright, with a clear sparkle in her pale blue eyes, and a large cap and collar of the very stiffest lace; but I answered:

"Among other things, the roomy amplitude of this house; so different from the saloon in the yacht; and I like these high ceilings and wide doors."

"Oh, I thought you were looking at the pictures. There are Lizzy and Louisa behind you, and there is Giles. Papa had them done: they were in the Royal Academy exhibition last year; then they went back to the artist, and we have only had them a fortnight."

I cast a glance behind me, saw two shepherdesses in white,—was instantly aware that Lizzy and Lou

were flattered, but, luckily, was not asked what I thought.

"And that's St. George opposite."

"You can't think, Graham," said Mr. Brandon, "what a life I am leading just now in consequence of that portrait."

"But is that meant for Mr. Brandon?" I asked.

"Meant for him!—of course it is," exclaimed Valentine. "Lizzy! Miss Graham won't believe that is Giles. She thinks it too flattering."

"I did not say anything of the kind. I think it is a very agreeable picture."

"What is the matter with it, then?" asked Valentine.

"As a likeness, do you mean?"

"Yes!—take a good look at him, and then see if it is not like."

I did take a good look. I saw not only that this same St. George was unlike the portrait, but he was delightfully unlike the image of his former self, which existed in my mind. He was even a little put out of countenance when I looked at him. I had felt very shy at the notion of seeing that man again; but this man I felt as much at ease with as if he had been an entire stranger. So after considering him for a moment, and finding that I was expected to reply, I said, "Nothing is the matter; but that it is not like." And I hoped they would not ask me whether I thought

it flattering—for I did think so—and I felt a sudden sense of joy and freedom, for I had faced the idea which had tormented me, and it had vanished into air.

It was evident that these portraits were just then subjects of frequent family discussion, and that the opinion of a stranger was thought valuable.

“The first thing papa asks you when he comes in,” observed Valentine, “will be whether you like that picture; and if you do not like it, he won’t like you. He thinks it perfection. I hear him and sister in the hall; they always come in when they think Giles has helped all round. Now you’ll see!”

I looked at it again and liked it less; then, while the original talked and laughed and made his dog beg for bones, I noticed him. I had always observed the peculiar grace of his figure, but he was so closely cropped when in the yacht, that he had an air of a convict about him. His hair was now grown; it was dark and stood back from his face with rather a cloud-like effect. His bruises and scorches had disappeared, and his face, though healthful in appearance, had no ruddy tints. His hair had no gloss, that in the portrait shone; but, on the whole, though he was not handsome, there was something striking in his appearance and distinguished about him; and how he had managed to turn himself into such a different person I could not think.

Mr. Mortimer now entered with his daughter, and

took his place at the head of the table. Silence was preserved; everybody looked at me. Mr. Brandon, though he pretended to occupy himself with a cold round of beef, was evidently in amused expectation of the question which sure enough was propounded almost directly.

"And what do you think of my pictures, eh, Miss Graham? Good likeness that over the chimney-piece;—uncommonly good; don't you think so?"

Obliged to answer, I replied that I had not noticed much likeness at first, but perhaps it would grow upon me.

He looked surprised; took up his glass to examine it anew. "Couldn't be better,—a wonderful art is portrait painting! Well, now, what fault do you find with it?"

He looked straight at me, and I knew that everyone else was looking too, Tom included. Nothing but the truth and the whole truth would do, so I wished to say it, and, as I hoped, to have done with it.

"I think it is flattered; but perhaps it does no justice to the original?"

"Flattered!" he exclaimed with evident astonishment, "and does no justice. The two things sound like contradictions. Flattered!"

"Well, papa," said Valentine, "you must admit that those eyes are blue?"

"So are Mr. Brandon's," I remarked; and turning to encounter them, I saw, to his amusement and mine, that they had a decidedly grey hue. "Ah, well," I could not help saying, "I'm sure they used to look blue in the yacht;" but this speech was followed by such a chorus of laughter that I should have felt discomfited if Tom had not joined in it and seemed as much amused as any one. "It must have been the green and yellow bruises that made them look blue," I continued by way of excuse for this want of observation, and then I was urged on by the family to make some further remarks, which Mr. Mortimer caused Valentine to repeat to him.

"She says," exclaimed Valentine, "that Giles has a much more original face than the portrait."

"You are a very original little girl," said Aunt Christie.

"Miss Graham has no wish to be original," said Mr. Brandon, "if you would only let her alone. Never mind, my liege," he continued, raising his voice and speaking to his stepfather; "no one is so good a judge of a portrait as the person it was done for, and if you are pleased the thing is good, it could not be better."

But Mr. Mortimer again returned to the charge. "How can a portrait be both flattered and the reverse?"

Then Tom came to the rescue, and said, that could

easily be; the gentleman could be made prominent at the expense of the man, the features might be ennobled and yet be made to express a meaner soul.

"Ah,—hem!" said Mr. Mortimer. "Giles, I'll take some more beef. He's the very image of his dear mother; her breathing image!"

"Graham, I wonder what sort of a portrait you would make?" observed Mr. Brandon.

"I'm too sublimely ugly to look well on canvas," said Tom. "I had a photograph done lately for my sister, but the features did not seem to have made up their minds as to their places! The eyes were everywhere. I did not notice the nose, but the mouth seemed to be nowhere."

Aunt Christie looked at him with surprise.

"Graham flatters himself that he's very ugly," said Mr. Brandon; "I don't see it myself; he says real ugliness distinguishes a man."

"Yes," said Tom, addressing Aunt Christie, "ugliness of the right sort is a kind of beauty; it has some of the best qualities of beauty—it attracts observation and fixes the memory. Now you'll find that you won't easily forget me."

He turned full upon her, and she had not a word to say. No doubt she did think him ugly, and she actually looked quite out of countenance, till Valentine, exclaiming that no one had admired the new carving-knife, Mr. Brandon took it up and displayed its pecu-

liarities; it was a circular thing, and looked sufficiently formidable.

"It was given to me by a friend of mine who is a poulterer," he remarked.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Henfrey; "don't believe a word he says, Miss Graham."

"Doesn't he make a good portion of his income by breeding poultry, and doesn't he contract with a man in London to sell it? Doesn't he send it up by carts full? I say he is a poulterer, only the oddness of the thing is that he stipulates to be allowed to kill every single bird himself, unless his friends kill them for him."

"Horrid man!" I exclaimed; "only think of taking delight in wringing the necks of cartloads of poor creatures!"

"He doesn't wring their necks," said Mrs. Henfrey, "he shoots them. Pheasants, you know!"

"Oh!"

"It's only his way of putting things."

"The poor birds were so tame the last time I went out with him that they came running up to us as if to be fed. That's manly sport, you know. I'll never shoot with him again."

"But I mind the day when ye were uncommonly fond of a gun," said Aunt Christie; "there was the old matchlock your grandfather Brandon gave you, it was almost as long as himself; and when ye com-

plained to the mannie Murdock how it kicked,—‘Kick does she?’ said he, taking the part of the old gun; ‘well, I’d sooner be kicked by her than by a Christian.’”

“So would I,” he answered, “some Christians kick very hard. Yes, I was a murderous little wretch. I remember the first rabbit I blew to pieces with it—I almost wept for joy, and grudged going to sleep at night, and losing sight of my own gun.”

“What are they talking about?” asked Mr. Mortimer.

“About St. George’s old gun, papa,” answered Valentine, who sat on his left hand; “he gave it to me, you know, when I was a very small boy; but I was not allowed to load it; so I used to sit by it, and rub it up here and there with sand-paper, and when I went out I used to lock it up in the attic, and wear the door-key round my neck, lest any one should get it.”

“Ay-e,” said Aunt Christie, making a sound almost two syllables long of that little word, “how your father smiles!” He did not hear her, and she went on. “Do ye mind, Giles, yer speech as a child, when I asked you what the new papa was like? Ye were hopping round the table, and little fat Emily after ye. ‘Some people, when they smile,’ ye answered, as gravely as possible, ‘some people when they smile only stretch out their mouths; but when the new papa smiles he lights up his shop.’ That was because they had taken

ye to London, and ye were so delighted with the shops when the gas was lit."

"If you go into all the family anecdotes that exist in your capacious memory, you must be put to death," he answered; "we can't stand it!"

"No," said Liz. "Now, sister, hasn't she told that anecdote a dozen times at least?"

Sister, who was just rising to leave the room with Mr. Mortimer, made answer, "that no doubt it had been told before."

"And I am sure I know no reason why I am to forget those old days," said the joyous old woman.

"Ah," said Valentine, "those were happy days, Aunt Christie, when *we* were young."

"Speak for yourself, laddie," she answered; "for my part I often feel very inconveniently young yet; I feel a spring of youthful joy in me sometimes which is strangely at variance with circumstances. It would be more to my credit if I could repress it, and I'm going to try."

"No, don't, dear," said Mr. Brandon.

"You're just right, love," said Liz.

"Now, Giles," exclaimed the old lady, menacing him with a spoon, "let me alone, and you too, Miss; you don't consider how you crumple my cap, kissing before company; there's Mr. Graham just scandalised, and no wonder."

"Graham feels rather faint at present," observed

Mr. Brandon, "but when I tell him that you belong to us all—"

"Yes, to us all," interrupted Lou; "but not to all equally."

"Their mother was my niece," said Miss Christie; "and Mr. Grant was a far-away cousin besides."

"Cousins don't count," observed Tom, "particularly Scotch cousins."

"So I tell her," said Mr. Brandon.

"Don't they?" exclaimed Miss Christie; "well, there's nothing more interesting to an intelligent mind than relationship, if ye consider it rightly. Why, dear me, I can trace the Brandon voice through fifteen families. Then the Grants all walk as if they'd been drilled. And as to the Mac Queens (my mother was a Mac Queen), I would almost engage to challenge any one of them by the handwriting."

As she appeared to address me, I answered, "Then I hope their characters are as much alike as their writing; for it always seems to me that one can judge so well what people are by how they write."

"Of some qualities one may certainly judge," said Tom; "and of the temper, the amount of energy, and of course the age and sex."

Both the Grants and their aunt declared themselves of a contrary opinion, and we were soon in the midst of a vehement discussion, every one having a letter or two to produce, folding down middle or ends, that

only select sentences might be seen; and being entreated to show more, and declining with pretended confusion.

At first Mr. Brandon took no part in the discussion, but after he had seen us guessing, and being generally wrong and sometimes oddly right, he said with gravity, "I have some writing here that I think very interesting; I would rather it did not go all round the table, but I should like Miss Graham's opinion on it."

He was standing on the rug under his portrait, and one of his sisters proposed to pass the letter across the table to me, but he declined, and coming round to my chair put into my hand an envelope, out of which he had drawn the letter just so far as to show these words, written in a very small and peculiarly delicate female hand:—

"My very dear Giles, I am pleased to find that you propose to shorten your stay at——" here the sheet was folded down.

"Am I to read all I can see?" I inquired.

"O, yes, but do not open the sheet, for the letter is confidential."

Confidential, indeed, for it ran thus,—*"There is nothing that I find so difficult as to do without you, and this feeling increases on me day by day."*

That was all, the signature was covered. I wished he had not given me such an affectionate letter to

read, especially as he chose to limit the confidence to me.

"What do you think of the writing?" he inquired.

"How very hard that we are not to see it!" exclaimed Valentine. "Is it a lady's hand, Miss Graham?"

"O yes."

"Ah! do I guess whose? I should rather say so! Does it express counsel, and a large mind, and extreme delicacy?"

"And a love of gardening and music," cried Louisa, evidently thinking, like Valentine, of some special person.

"I don't know about the gardening," I replied.

"Do you think it is a young lady?" asked Mr. Brandon.

"Yes, I should say so, decidedly; but she has not been taught in a modern school, for the letters are round."

"Round!" exclaimed Valentine; "oh, then I give it up."

"I wish you would say what you think," said Mr. Brandon, "for this writing really is deeply interesting to me. Do you think the writing expressive of a hasty temper?"

"No, it flows—I think it means gentleness, and even spirits. This person is seldom in a hurry, and

has done this deliberately. The hand looks as if it had been much used since the writer left school."

Mr. Brandon really looked unutterable things; but I thought it was quite fair that he should suffer for having handed out such a letter.

"Do you think the writer's disposition likely to be affectionate?" he inquired.

"I can form that opinion without any aid from the writing."

"Dear me, this mystery grows very interesting," exclaimed Lou.

"Ah!" said Mr. Brandon, with a sigh that I thought affected, "you mean that you could form that opinion from the words; but the writer's actions leave me no room to doubt that these but feebly reflect the heart."

"Why, he's actually sentimental," cried Liz. "Giles, can this be you?"

"May I express a hope, then, that the affection is reciprocal," I answered; but I thought he should not have made such a letter a matter for discussion: it was evidently a letter from a lady, and not from one of the ladies of the family, for I had seen their writing.

"Reciprocal!" he exclaimed. "There is no one breathing whom I care for half so much! Do you admire my good taste?"

I hesitated.

"You think I had better not have shown it?"

"I think such letters ought not to be shown, unless their writers may be supposed to have no objection. I think this one must have been written in confidence."

"Oh," he answered, holding out his hand for it; "I have others by the same writer which I religiously keep to myself. This is nothing; but they are enough to spoil any man. They have completely spoilt me. Well, Graham, will you come? Here, Lou, suppose you read this aloud."

He tossed the letter lightly on to the table, among his brother and sisters. It was instantly snatched up; and while he decamped with Tom, he was followed by cries of "O, you cheat, Giles—you horrid cheat; it's a letter from papa, it's his writing." The rest of the sheet was straightway unfolded and laid before me, and proved to be a loving letter from the old man to the young one, thanking him for having given up, to please him, some intended journeyings. It further related to a certain horse, by name Farmer, who had refused to eat his corn; and to some railway shares, which were to be looked after.

I felt that I had been ignominiously cheated, and wondered that the very circumstance of his showing it to me in the presence of his family had not made me sure it could be nothing of especial interest.

But I had not much time to think. We all left the dining-room, and Liz and Lou took me upstairs to my

room, where they began to inspect some of my gowns which Mrs. Brand had left on the sofa.

It must be natural to girls to be sociable—at least, it must be natural to me. The delight I felt in talking cosily to Lizzy and Lou is indescribable. We did not say anything very wise, or very much the reverse; but we speedily became confidential. They told me they had vainly speculated as to what sort of a girl I should prove to be. I confessed how shy I had felt at the notion of coming among so many strangers. These bygone feelings we laughed at, and had just agreed to address each other by our Christian names, when there was a violent knock at the door.

“Who’s there?” said Liz.

The cracked voice responded,—

“Ah! I said you were there. What are you doing boxed up with Miss Graham? She’s not your visitor a bit more than mine. If you won’t come out soon, I shall come in.”

“We are coming down almost directly.”

“Well, do. It’s a shame. Miss Graham?”

“Yes.”

“Don’t you feel very dull without me?”

“Of course.”

Valentine withdrew. We meant to follow, but some fresh topic of discourse was started, and we stayed, perhaps, ten minutes longer.

Another louder knock.

"What do you want, you tiresome boy?" said Lou, now opening the door.

"Why, Charlotte, Dick, and Frank are here; and they have brought the blind pupil."

So down we went, and found these young visitors—two fine youths about eighteen years of age, a very pretty girl, and a blind boy.

I soon found that these were the daughter and pupils of the Vicar. They were all energetic in their lamentations over Valentine's cough; for he, it seemed, when in health, was a pupil at the Vicarage. He was openly assured by the pretty Charlotte that the whole house was in despair at his absence; then one of the pupils administered further comfort by remarking that it never took more than a month to "polish off" the whooping-cough; the other tucked the blind boy under his arm in a really kindly fashion, and they retired, after receiving a present of a little box of eggs from Valentine, which the blind boy touching lightly with his finger-tips, named, and, as it seemed, correctly.

"Old Tikey," Valentine afterwards observed, "was a horrid coddle. Fellows must have the whooping-cough some time, and yet Old Tikey had actually sent him home on account of two boys who had not yet taken it. And isn't that sneak, Prentice, delighted?" he added.

"Who is Prentice?" I asked.

"He's a most odiously conceited fool;—he's an intolerable young prig."

"Come," said Liz; "this is nothing but rank jealousy. Prentice is reading for Cambridge—he is Val's rival, Dorothea."

"He is only just nineteen—five months older than I am—and he is engaged to Charlotte. Only think of that!"

"Silly fellow!"

"Old Tikey doesn't know. Do you think those fellows who called just now look older than I?"

"Older? No, younger. Much shorter, and more boyish altogether."

"Ah! they are small for their years; but the oldest of *those* has made an offer! There never was such a muff in this world; we can make him do anything."

"It's quite true, I assure you," said Lou, seeing me look amazed.

"But I suppose he made it of his own free will?" I inquired.

"Nothing of the sort; we made him do it. It was just after Prentice had informed me of his engagement to Charlotte, and we were all bursting with rage at the airs he gave himself. And so, by a happy inspiration, I said to Grainger—that fellow whom you have just seen—'Well, Dick, I suppose *your* affair will be coming off soon?' And we actually made him believe—

(that we might make Prentice appear the more ridiculous, you know)—we made him believe that he had paid great attention to Old Tikey's sister. She is fat; more than forty; and we made him believe that he had stolen her affections, and must take the consequence."

"If I were you, I would keep these schoolboy delinquencies to myself," said Liz.

"Very well, then; talk and amuse Miss Graham yourself."

A silence naturally followed, which I broke after a while by asking for the end of the anecdote.

"Oh," said Valentine, "two of the other fellows and I talked seriously to him. He is such a jolly muff. We said, 'Grainger, we could not have thought it of you!' And we actually worked him up to such a pitch that he vowed he would do it. But he was very miserable. He said it made him so low to think of a long engagement; and, besides, what would his mother say? We told him he ought to have thought of that before. We made a great deal of his always having carried her prayer-book to church for her. We said, that perhaps he was not aware that this was considered the most pointed attention you could possibly pay to a woman! Well, then we talked of honour, you know."

"What a shame!"

"Yes," replied Valentine, "so it was; but then

there was Prentice. We felt that we could not live in the same house with him, unless we could make him feel small. We were strolling under a clump of trees, not far from Old Tikey's house; and when we had worked at Grainger for some time, he suddenly darted off. And an old woman, who lives in a cottage close by, came out and talked to me about my cough, and said if I took three hairs out of a drover's dog's tail, just as he was going to London after the drover, he would carry the cough away with him. 'Those *simple remedies*,' she observed, 'would often succeed when all the doctors were posed.' Well, we went on talking to her, and wandering about; then we sat down on a bank, while I did a little coughing. It was the day before I was requested to go home to my disconsolate family. Then we saw Grainger coming. He ran very fast, and looked very jolly. He flung himself down beside us, panting. 'Well,' he cried out, 'I've done it, and she won't have me; that's one good thing! But I'll never make an offer again, I can tell you, whatever you may say.' 'Won't have you!' we all cried out, screaming with laughter. 'What, have you gone and done it already?' And he said he had. He had met her in the shrubbery, and had said, as we told him to say, that he was afraid she was getting thin. She said, 'What, Grainger?' And so then he continued, 'I said to her what you told me about my hand and heart, and all that; and she won't have me

—said she should not think of such a thing.' Well, we all shook hands with him. I'm a very moral fellow, so I talked to him. I said to him, 'Let this be a warning to you never to trifle with the feelings of the tender sex again.' He said it should."

"This is really true?" I asked.

"Quite true. When he heard of it, Prentice almost gnashed his teeth. We told it to him as if it was the most commonplace thing in the world that Grainger should have made an offer."

"Isn't this a queer boy?" said Lou.

"Then Prentice should not be such an ass," he burst out.

"Well, now we are going out for a walk, and Aunt Christie, too. I must go and find her," observed one of the girls.

"I shall accompany you. Some other time I shall tell Miss Graham all about Charlotte, and how she and Prentice correspond. Prentice is such a fool that he even steals other people's jokes, and tells them all wrong. You know that the house of Daniel Mortimer, Esq., has one long wing?"

"Yes."

"Well, one day when we were making some experiments here, Prentice went up to my room for a bottle of steel filings, and Giles met him wandering about; so he said, by way of a mild joke, 'Don't you know that, like the albatross, he sleeps on the wing?'

Well, Prentice actually was heard to tell that the next day thus, 'My friend Mortimer, I daresay you know that, like the albatross, he—he flies all night!' He had forgotten the point of it; but he came here to lunch with Charlotte soon after, and told St. George how Old Tikey had bought some Irish pigs that would not stop in the sty. One ran away, and jumped clean through a cottage window. Mr. Tikey, in full chase, bolted in at the door and found the woman of the house boiling a dozen at least, of pheasant's eggs. 'Boiling pheasant's eggs!' said Giles; 'foolish woman. Why, they were poached already! If I had such a pig as that,' he went on, 'I would soon cure him.' Would you believe it! Prentice looked earnestly at him, and answered, 'How?' "

If Prentice had not been one of the chief arbiters of my fate—I may say *the* chief arbiter—I would not have recorded all this nonsense of Valentine's. As it was, let me say, with due solemnity, that this was the first time Prentice rose on my horizon like a star.

CHAPTER V.

"Who would dote on thing so common,
As mere outward handsome woman?"—*Wither*.

WE set off for a walk, and I smelt the fresh earth and the spring flowers. "Oh, do let me garden a little?" I exclaimed, as we came to a border, by which lay some gardening tools.

"To be sure, there is a rake and a trowel," said Aunt Christie; "rake away, my dear."

"No; I must have the spade, it is so delightful to set one's foot on it, and feel the earth coming up."

"Ah!" exclaimed Valentine, "and so you shall. 'Let spades be trumps,' she said, 'and trumps they were.' (Pope)."

"Oh Val, how mean of you to begin in this way, when you know you promised," said Liz, sullenly.

"I said I would be sparing, just at first," retorted Valentine; "but, now, Miss Graham, don't you think it is very mean of my family to repress my rising genius? many would be proud of it."

"What have they done?"

"Done!—I say, Lou, how long is this to go on? She has dug up a lily bulb."

"I will set it again; now I have dug enough."

"Then we can proceed. Why, this is what they have done: my vein lies in apt quotations, and they won't let me exercise it."

"We didn't like it every day, and all day long," said Liz. "Now, I'll just lay the case before you, Dorothea: Emily knew that when she went away we should be terribly oppressed, and so she made a rule——"

"That the moment I began, if they could call out the author's name, and say, 'Pax,' I was instantly to stop, if it was only at the second word; but, if they

could not, I might go on to the end; and, then, if I could not give his name, I might be pinched, or pricked, or otherwise tormented." He said this with an indescribable air of boyish simplicity.

Aunt Christie remarked that the rule sounded fair.

"Yes," he exclaimed; "but they never call out 'Pax,' for they are not at all well read, so the rule comes to nothing, unless St. George is present, and he is so quick, that I can hardly ever get out a word; in fact, he often calls out what I am *going* to say, and stops it; then of course I'm stumped. Now, what are you laughing at, Miss Graham?"

"Because 'you are so extremely young, sir' (Dickens)."

"I'm almost as old as you are," he replied.

Was there ever such an opportunity given for a retort; the old aunt, with her fine Doric accent, instantly exclaimed, "I grant thee, for we are women when boys are but boys."

He danced round her, shouting out various names, but not the right one; and she went on till she had drawled out her quotation:—"Now don't work your arms and legs about so, laddie; it's quite true, as Miss Graham will tell you, and ye should not have begun it."

"Yes," I went on, "'We grow upon the sunny side of the wall' (Taylor)."

"Ah," said Valentine, calming down, after his

exercises, "I'm not up in that old fellow. Who would have thought it? 'Thou art a caitiff and a lying knave, and thou hast stolen my dagger and my sword;' those are almost the only lines of his that I know; but they're sweetly appropriate."

"Well, now we shall have a little peace, I hope," said Liz, "as he is conquered with his own weapons."

"Are you conquered?" I inquired. "I think you are only sighing to yourself, 'Ah me, what perils do environ the boy that meddles with cold iron.'"

"Boy, indeed!" he exclaimed; "but, Pax, (Hudibras,) this is nothing but envy of my superior parts. I will lead you and Aunt Christie such a life. Even if you quench me, you will only be disappointed, as the wild Tartar is who, when he spies a man that's handsome, valiant, wise, if he can kill him, thinks to inherit his wit, his wisdom, and his spirit; or, as that famous schoolman was, who swallowed his enemy's knife, that it might be handy to whet his words, and sharpen his tongue on."

"How was he disappointed?"

"He found it cut short all his arguments."

"And the Tartar?"

"Why he was doubly disappointed, for when he had killed the other Tartar, there was nobody left to fight with, which was very dull; and he himself was as ugly and cowardly as ever."

"And that's a fine compliment, by implication to us," said the old aunt.

"Yes," said Valentine, "and one chief merit of this quoting faculty is, that by means of it, one can tell people such home truths."

"Well," said Aunt Christie, "but it's a very elaborate kind of wit, and I think I agree with Lizzy, that it's not worth exercising."

"The fact is," said Valentine, "I am not doing myself justice. I feel so coy to-day; you really must bring me forward. Wait a minute."

He darted off to a little copse, and thrust his head into a bush.

"The Oubit grows," said Aunt Christie; "he's a stately young fellow."

"I said so," exclaimed Valentine, coming up; "those precious little lesser-white-throats are building there again."

"But you won't be so mean as to steal the eggs," said Liz; "I am sure you have eggs enough."

"Nay, nay," said Aunt Christie, unexpectedly taking Valentine's part, "ye must not look for virtues that are contrary to all nature. I should as soon expect to meet with a ghost that could crack a nut, as with a boy that could keep his hands off a nest of young linties."

"That's the second time I have been called a boy during the last five minutes."

"Didn't ye invite me, yourself, into your room last Christmas," exclaimed Aunt Christie, "and wasn't it just choked with rubbish of every sort that boys delight in?"

"He has such a value for some of his rare eggs," said Lou, "that he takes them about with him, packed in bran, wherever he goes."

"Well," answered Valentine, "I don't see that they are a bit worse rubbish than many things that other people carry about."

"Not a bit, Oubit, not a bit; the amount of rubbish that some people are proud to carry is just amazing. It is a blessed thing, indeed, that none of us can take our rubbish to another world; for, if we could (I speak it reverently) some of the 'many mansions' would be little better than lumber-rooms."

"Why do you call him 'Oubit'?" I inquired.

"Mamma did," was the reply.

"But what is an Oubit?"

"Nobody knows. St. George thinks it's a hairy caterpillar; but I say it must be a kind of newt."

By this time we had reached a little wood, as full as it would hold of anemones, celandine, and wild daffodil. We gathered quantities of them, and I felt the joy of roving about where I would. This is a kind of bliss that no one can imagine who has not been some time held captive at sea. It kept me under its influence till we had returned to the house, and I had

dressed for dinner. Some neighbours had been invited to meet us. I told Liz and Lou that I had never been present at a dinner-party in my life. They said this was not a real dinner-party, it was only having a few friends to dinner, and that among them would be only one interesting person. This was a nephew of Mr. Mortimer's, a banker in a neighbouring town, who lived a little way out of it, and had been invited to meet Tom because he was such a clever man, and because they wanted to show him that they had clever friends themselves sometimes.

None of the guests had made their appearance when I came into the drawing-room. Mrs. Henfrey and Valentine were alone there. I was asked how I had liked my walk; and when I had answered, Mrs. Henfrey said, "And which way did Giles take Mr. Graham?"

"As if you could not guess, sister," exclaimed Valentine.

The sister smiled, and I looked out at a window, and saw a wide stretch of beautiful country, for the drawing-room was upstairs; and I thought Tom must have been pleased, whichever way he had walked.

"Of course," continued Valentine, "he went down the Wigfield Road, that he might gaze on those chimneys and the endeared outline of that stable."

"I thought she wasn't at home," said Mrs. Henfrey.

"Mind," observed Valentine, "I don't know that he went that way, I only feel sure of it. You ask him."

"Oh, you feel sure, do you; I thought Miss Dorinda was not come home."

"No more she is; but has the place where she hangs out no charms for a constant mind?"

"You are rude—hangs out, indeed! I wonder what Miss Graham thinks of you! Ah! here is Giles! Well, which way did you walk?"

"Down the Wigfield Road," replied Mr. Brandon.

"What attractions must a whole wig possess," said Valentine, aside, to me, "'when beauty draws us with a single hair.' (Pope)."

"Is she handsome?" I asked, also aside.

"She is."

Strange to say this revelation as to the state of Giles's heart was a considerable relief to me. I am quite sure I was glad. I had always known, past the possibility of a doubt, that he felt no attraction towards me; but I felt a kind of enthusiasm still about him, because he was philanthropical, and I thought he had high motives, so I cared for him. In a certain sense he was dear to me, and I did not wish to lose him—out of my world—married or single; but I had been teased about him, and, consequently, I had felt as if all the natural instinct of friendship towards him must be smothered; now I knew that he had attraction elsewhere, and I felt calm security and ease flow into my heart at the thought of it. "Now," I thought, "this

annoyance really is over." I have frequently thought so; and yet it kept cropping up again.

So I thought, as the visitors arrived. Talk flowed around me, and I joined now and then in it; but soon sank again into a reverie, from which I only roused myself when I saw Mr. Brandon standing before me, offering his arm, and slightly smiling at the sight of my deep abstraction.

Valentine followed with Lou. "I say, Miss Graham!" he exclaimed, as we began to descend.

"Yes."

"I'm so hungry—there's an unutterable want and void—a gulf, a craving, and a sinking in, as when——"

"O stop! at least, I mean, Pax (Taylor), what you have been about since you came home is very obvious."

Mr. Brandon glanced at me with amused surprise.

"Obvious," replied Valentine; "of course it is. I would be loth to cast away my speech, for besides that it is excellently——"

Here he was stopped by the "Pax."

"Now that is what I complain of," said his brother, "if you will quote, what you say should not only be applicable, but droll in the application."

"You're always stamping on me," said Valentine.

Both he and Liz had a delightful little way of being sulky for an instant, and then forgetting it again. So, as he came out of that sulks and sat down beside me, I murmured to him, "O Knight, thou lackst a cup

of canary; when did I see thee so put down!" but I felt on the whole that quoting was a tiresome trick, and I would not help him with it any more.

We passed rather a dull evening: the guests were familiar with the household without being intimate; every one present seemed used to every one else. But, as the evening advanced, I again had the pleasure of seeing Tom get into a most vehement argument. He and Mr. Brandon were on one side, and Mr. John Mortimer on the other. The gold coinage of England, it appears, is pure, but the silver they called not real money, but tokens. I hardly understood enough to know which side triumphed, or why it mattered. But it was delightful to see Tom so full of fire.

When all the guests were gone, Valentine withdrew, and as we still sat talking, he came in again with a hat in his hand, and, walking up to his brother, held it out to him, just as a beggar sometimes does in the street.

St. George, pretending to misunderstand him, leaned over it as he sat, and looked down into the crown with an air of great interest. "Well!" he said.

"A poor boy out of work, sir!" said Valentine; "no friends to speak of; earned nothing all the winter; silver coinage of this wretched country so debased that it's against my principles to spend it. Nothing but gold can do me any good, sir."

"I never give gold to beggars."

"Well hand out your purse, then, will you?" said Valentine, "and I'll promise only to take *one*."

St. George actually did so.

"But you had much better say two," continued Valentine; "they would last much longer."

"No, I won't," answered Giles, laughing; "they would not last a day longer."

Valentine thereupon returned the purse, and, with the sovereign in his hand, marched straight across the room to his father. "Papa," he exclaimed, in a loud, plaintive voice, as of one deeply injured, "will you speak to Giles?"

"Will I what?" exclaimed his father, who had been amusing himself by watching the transaction.

"Will you speak to Giles?" repeated Valentine, in the same loud, plaintive tone. "If this sort of thing is allowed to go on, and I can get money whenever I like, it will ruin the independence of my character." (He showed the sovereign in his palm.) "Giles has no strength of mind whatever," he continued, shaking his head in a threatening manner. "You'd much better increase my allowance; for, if not, I'm very much afraid this system will continue."

"Go to bed, sir! go to bed!" exclaimed his father. "You are an impudent young dog, if ever there was one; and you know very well that you are not to sit up late while you have this cough upon you."

Valentine retired with great docility; and the next

morning when I woke I saw Mrs. Brand holding a great bunch of primroses and violets. She said she had picked them up on the mat outside my door. A little twisted note was stuck into the midst of them. I opened it, and it ran thus:—

“When I awoke, I said to myself, ‘Ale, Squeerey?’ (Dickens) meaning primroses. The same agreeable party answered, with promptitude, ‘Certainly, a glassful’ (ditto). You should have had more, only I have been studying you can guess what.—His own, V. M.”

In due time I came down, and, as I entered, heard Mr. Mortimer saying, “Well, if he is not likely to be in time, we must have prayers without him.”

He was evidently Mr. Brandon: every one else was present.

So we had prayers; the venerable white head looking more reverend than ever as it bent over the book.

We then proceeded to the dining-room to breakfast, and Mrs. Henfrey said, “I don’t quite understand this matter yet.”

“Why, sister,” said Valentine, “it is simple enough. Giles was out, and saw this boy stuck in the boggy ditch; upon which, throwing himself into an attitude, he very naturally exclaimed, ‘Though thou art of a different church, I will not leave thee in the lurch.’”

"I'll venture to say he said nothing of the kind," said Mrs. Henfrey, very tartly. "It was the milk-boy, was it not?"

"Yes."

"Well, his parents are not Dissenters. Stuff and nonsense! They only go to meeting now and then."

"But he must have said something," argued Valentine. "He may have changed the word 'church' to 'parish,' and added, 'I will not leave thee in the marish.'"

"It's extraordinary, I am sure," said Mrs. Henfrey, with a slight groan, "how the poets came to write so many lines as if on purpose for him."

"Well, my boy," said Mr. Mortimer, "now suppose you give us a sensible account of the matter, without any more of this foolery."

"I don't know any more, papa, excepting that I met Giles marching home, covered with mud and clay up to his waistcoat pockets."

"Just then the old thin footman came in, and was asked what he knew of the matter. His reply, given with a toast-rack in his hand, ran thus:—

"Yes, sir, Mr. Brandon, sir, was going along just where the ditch is so wide and boggy, and he heard a boy a hollering and a hollering, and he found the milk-boy was stuck in the clay. He had tried to jump the ditch, instead of going round by the plank. That was how it came to pass; and the more he worked his

legs about, the deeper he got, till the ditch was full of puddles of milk. And so, sir, Mr. Giles dragged the boy out, and he had just got him on the bank when I came up, for I had heard the hollering as I went nigh, with the rolls. Says Mr. Giles to me, 'Just scrape the poor child, Sam; here's sixpence to pay for his milk. And let this be a lesson to you, youngster,' he says, 'never to jump over a bog when there is a plank near at hand.' So, then, sir,—(here the footman uttered a laugh of sudden delight)—“So then sir, Mr. Giles went back a few paces, and gave a little run to jump over in the very same place, but the bank, being soft and rotten, broke with him, and he slipped down backwards, and——”

“And tumbled in himself!” exclaimed Mr. Mortimer, in high delight—“Ha! ha! Well, such things will happen now and then.”

“Yes, sir, Mr. Brandon tumbled in backwards, and sat himself down in the very thickest of the bog, and splashed himself all over with milk and mud.” Here, the old man, unable to restrain his mirth, retreated hastily, and Mr. Brandon came in.

“Well, Giles, my boy,” said his stepfather, after the customary morning greeting, “how did you get out of that bog? Sam has told us all the rest.”

“Did he tell you how, in my adversity, he and that little ungrateful wretch stood on the bank perfectly convulsed with laughter, and how I was so ex-

cessively surprised when I found myself sitting in the bottom of the ditch, that I did not stir for a full half-minute, but sat staring at them with appealing mildness?"

They all laughed but Mrs. Henfrey; and she, not in the least amused, inquired how he got out, after all.

"Oh, I floundered up, and Sam held his stick. That part of the business was soon managed."

"Let this be a lesson to you, youngster," said Valentine, with a kind of respectful gravity, "'never to jump over a bog when there is a plank near at hand' (Brandon)." He took care to speak loud enough for his father to hear, and in the plaintive voice that he generally affected when making a joke.

"Come, come, sir," said the old man, secretly enjoying it, "let me have no more of this. Giles is a great deal older than you are, sir."

The elder brother said nothing, but he looked at Valentine with a significant smile, and proceeded to help himself to the viands, and talk with Tom over their last night's argument with John Mortimer. The English sovereign, it appears, is worth much the same all the world over, but the English shilling is alloyed, and this, it seems, is not done with any deliberate intention of cheating the English people, but from motives of policy. Now, Tom and Mr. Brandon had sagely remarked that so long as anybody would give

a sovereign for twenty shillings, it mattered nothing to the people that they were not really worth it; but Mr. John Mortimer had maintained that it did matter; it mattered very much to everybody, but especially to the poor.

Tom declared his intention of going into the subject, but this was not merely because Mr. John Mortimer had differed from them, but because he had talked of the whole of that wonderful invention called money as if a great part of the prosperity of nations depended on what their money was made of, and how much they were charged for the making of it. Moreover, in a evil hour for himself, he had declared that these things were so simple that he wondered how there could be any difference of opinion about them.

This discussion being not of much interest to any of us but to me, and that only because it had roused Tom, we all retired to the little morning room except Tom and Mr. Brandon, who had not finished his breakfast, and here Valentine brought a Volume of "Telemachus," to his sister Lou, and, sitting down by her, began to read aloud, with much mouthing and a particularly bad accent.

"You see, Miss Graham," said Mrs. Henfrey, casting a reproachful glance at him, "this young gentleman makes no stranger of you."

I said truly enough, that I was glad of it; and she was quite right. We might have been staying there a

year for any difference we made in any of their arrangements or any of their gentle, easy household ways.

Valentine remarked that Giles had threatened not to take him to France that year unless he would improve his French, and he stumbled through a page or two, being continually corrected by Lou.

"It's perfectly abominable," she exclaimed, "you will pronounce every *e* impartially, and how often do I tell you not to divide the words."

Valentine groaned — "What with your being so particular, and this fellow being such a shocking muff, it is too much for my spirits. Now then—'Mais dans votre bonheur souvenez-vous du malheureux Narbal et ne cessez jamais de m'aimer. Quand il eut achevé ces paroles je l'arrosai de mes larmes (ugh!): de profonds soupirs m'empêchaient de parler (hang this fellow, he's always blubbering!) et nous nous embrassions en silence.' Miss Graham, did you ever read 'Tele-machus' through?"

"Yes."

"Does he find his papa?"

"I shall not tell you; that might rob the story of its thrilling interest."

"Well, I can't stand much more of this sobbing and crying. Homer himself is bad enough, and Pope makes him worse. They 'cry quarts:'—

“ ‘Tears his cheeks bedewed,
Nor less the father poured a social flood,
They wept abundant and they wept aloud.’ ”

Tom and Mr. Brandon now came in.

“Ah!” said Aunt Christie, partly addressing them, “and these are the classics, ye see—these are what ye spend your young lives, all of you, in getting a smattering of.”

“But it must be done,” answered Valentine, “and as this fellow waters all the strangers with his tears, I really am afraid he will pour out such a flood if he meets his father, that the consequences to that old buffer will be serious.”

“A mere smattering,” repeated Aunt Christie, nodding at them; “and so, as they can’t bear to feel that all their time has been wasted, they pretend afterwards to think highly of the classics; *though they know better*. Why, what’s in this Homer that they make such a work about? What’s Achilles but a sort of glorified navvy? He kills his meat as well as his man. Priam runs away at first (that I never could get over), and what’s it all for? Why, two women, neither of whom is any better than she should be.”

“You shall write another Shorter Catechism,” said Mr. Brandon, “and we shall all be bound to learn it.”

“First question,” said Tom, blandly: “*Where is Scotland situated!* Answer: *At the top of England.*”

“Ay, indeed, and ye are very right,” said the old aunt, laughing.

"Second question," added Mr. Brandon: "*What is a school?* Answer: *A place where they teach boys to be pagans every day, and tell them to be Christians once a week.*"

He then walked up to the window, and saying what a beautiful morning it was, asked if we should like to have it open, and was just opening it, when I, having nothing to do ran up-stairs for my workbox. In less than three minutes I came down again, and outside the door, which was shut, stood Valentine panting on the mat.

"It's locked," he said; "the door's locked and you can't get in."

"Locked?"

"Yes; that villain Giles,—how he comes to be so strong I can't think;—I was as quiet as possible, reading away at my French, and he came behind me, and in the twinkling of an eye, before I could speak, he folded me up, and I was outside the window sitting among the tulips and things. Look at my coat. I'm all covered with tulip-dust."

"Dear me, I wish I had seen it. Did he send you flying out, or only lay you down like a parcel?"

"O, how base some people are! Giles, Giles, sir" (he called through the keyhole), "you've locked out Miss Graham."

"No, stop," I said, "as we are locked out suppose

we steal a march on them, and go for a walk this lovely morning?"

"You won't do it?"

"I will, if you will."

He expressed his delight in some strange fashion. I ran up-stairs, was soon equipped, and off we set, on one of the sweetest spring mornings that ever smiled itself away.

The shadows of dark-green leaves are sweet and solemn, but the shadows of pink and white blossom are the rarest and most delicate in all nature. We heard all about us the piping of blackbirds, and the near humming of contented bees. We got into the orchard and down to a little stream that bordered it, and when I saw the glittering water-butter-cups, the mosses, and all the trees so ghostly fair, I felt what an ecstasy there is in youth and spring.

Then we got under a great pear-tree, smelt its blossom, and looked up through it to the pale blue sky, and I was so oppressed with happiness, that I could hardly speak, and for a long time could not leave the enchanted spot; the common world I felt would seem so plain and chill after it.

But we did leave it, and I found the firwood beyond almost as beautiful; it abounded with the nests of thrushes and linnets, and round its edges we gathered violets; then we came back to the orchard, sat down on a bench and my heart kept repeating, "How great

is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!" Then suddenly Valentine said—

"Do you think people are better or worse than they appear?"

"Do you mean people in general, or ourselves?"

"O well, I suppose I meant you and me."

"I think just now we must be better than we appear,—we must have some better thoughts than any words we have said."

"But this is such a wonderful morning,—so lovely that it makes one feel quite solemn."

"Yes, and everything so happy and so good."

"Ah, well, I wish I did not live with such extremely good people—such people I mean as my father, and Giles, and Miss Dorinda. When you see how they go on you will wish the same, unless you are a very excellent person yourself, and I don't see that you are."

"Oh, but I always thought it helped one on to be with such people."

"No, it doesn't. They have found out all sorts of ways, both of doing good and being good: they go into motives, and they think they must govern their bad feelings. Well, I should never have found out such things if I had been let alone, therefore it would not have been my duty to practise them. Now they stare me in the face, and I often feel miserable for fear I ought to be different."

"Oh, you are quite a child in spite of your height,"

was my thought; "you have no reserve, even with a stranger." But I answered,—“Surely that is better than not thinking about it.”

“It is very disagreeable,” he replied, “to feel that one gets worse as one gets older.”

“Disagreeable,” I replied; “how can you use a word so inadequate to express the feeling?”

“Well, you know what I mean.”

“Yes; but when we feel that, we know that we can have help to become better if we will ask for it.”

“Ah, yes,” he answered, naïvely; “but then, you know you would have to ask for it quite sincerely, and without any reservation. Do you think I look as if I was going to be a clergyman?”

“Not in the least as far as I can judge.”

“But I am; at least if I can make up my mind to it. Mamma always wished it so much, and so does my father.”

“I do not see that your being so fond of fun is at all against it.”

“No—so Giles says—and some fellows must be clergymen, you know. I’ve got to decide during the next few months, and if I really feel I ought not, Giles says he shall back me. Isn’t it odd, my talking in this way to you?”

“Very odd; I was just thinking so.”

“I never do, excepting to him, and not to him if I can help it, because he takes advantage of me after-

wards; when I don't work he reminds me of things we have talked about. I have no business to be out here now with you. I ought to be doing my Greek."

"Bring it here then, and we will do it together."

"Ah! I want to hear you read Greek; but will you promise to wait for me?"

I promised, and while he was gone sat under the pear-tree delighted with life and spring.

Tramp, tramp, came a slow foot. I wished Valentine had not been so expeditious; but I did not look round. Something was being read or said aloud, and I soon observed that it was by a far different voice from the cracked one I had been listening to that morning.

The steady foot came on; there was a narrow path before the bench, and I saw Mr. Brandon advancing, looking grave and abstracted. He was conning or reading a speech from some written notes in his hand, and was perfectly unconscious of my presence as I sat buried among the bending pear-boughs.

I heard a sentence as he advanced. He did not look up, and would have passed but that he had to push aside a branch, in doing which he glanced off his notes, and beheld me within a yard of his face.

He started up again with no little surprise, and sent the bough swinging in his haste, so that it scattered me and the grass with a shower of little flower pearls.

"Miss Graham! who would have thought it?—and all alone."

"All alone: that is no misfortune. I am very happy."

"Yes," he answered, "I see you are. Set in a white world of blossom, and lost in maiden meditation; but why did you come here?"

"Because I was locked out of the morning room."

"A sufficient cause, and one that ought to make me ashamed of myself, but does not; for, if I may judge by appearance, you are very much indebted to me."

"Yes, it is so long since I set my feet on the soft delightful sward, that I wish I might stay here all day."

"You were led here by instinct?"

"No, by Valentine; and he is now gone to fetch his Greek books, to do some construing with me."

"What a delightful *camaraderie* seems to be established already between you two!"

"Birds of a feather, you know."

"You are joking; you cannot really feel any similarity and equality."

Being touched here on a weak point, I replied that I felt myself to be a grown-up woman while he was only a boy. "But he is a very delightful boy," I went on, "for he likes me, and likes to be with me."

"In my eyes he is a charming young fellow, a joyous, idle, frank, unreasonable young dog; but is every one, even a boy, charming in your eyes if he likes you, and likes to be with you?"

"I don't know. I should think not. But this sudden friendliness I have not met with hitherto; it has the charm of novelty."

"That charm," he said, quietly, "will most likely soon wear off."

He stood before me pressing the moss with his foot, and with the faint shadows of the blossom flickering on his face. I think he was a little impatient to go on, but he could not very well leave me by myself any more than I could tell him I liked just as well to be alone.

"What a time that boy is!" he presently said, looking along the path, and lo! the expression of his face changed suddenly to one of considerable embarrassment, his open forehead flushed slightly, and he made a hasty movement as if he would have retreated, but checked himself.

At the same instant I heard several voices, Mr. Mortimer's among them, and presently the fine white head emerged from the entanglement of blossoming boughs; then Liz and Louisa appeared, and lastly Valentine.

Giles stood his ground.

"Bless me," exclaimed Mr. Mortimer, "how plea-

sant it is out here! I thought you were getting up your lecture, Giles," and thereupon he sat down by me and cleared his throat loudly, and I thought significantly.

"So I was," answered the step-son, "and coming accidentally down here, I found Miss Graham sitting all alone."

At that ill-advised, but most true word, "accidentally," both the sisters and Mr. Mortimer openly smiled. I was not at all put out of countenance, "the endeared outlines of those chimneys" were present to my thoughts, if not to theirs.

"Well," said Valentine, excusing himself for having left me, "I am sure I have not been gone a quarter of an hour, and I should have been here before, only that I could not find my lexicon."

"We must try to forgive you, my boy," said Mr. Mortimer, with a twinkle in his eye, "and so must Giles. A quarter of an hour is not long, after all, for him to be kept from his lecture."

Here taking up the defence of the oppressed, I made a remark as to how I had been locked out, and this gradually drew on the whole story.

"Locked him out!" exclaimed Mr. Mortimer, with a puzzled air.

"Yes, papa," said Lou, "Giles put the Oubit out of the window, for making game of him at breakfast-

time, and then locked the door to prevent his getting in again."

"And I brought Miss Graham here," said Valentine; "and we were so happy."

"But when we unlocked the door," observed Liz, "we found it bolted on the outside."

"Naturally you did," said Valentine.

"And we did not like to ring," she continued; "we thought it would look so odd to the servant to find us bolted in, so we waited, hoping Dorothea would come to the outside."

"Where is young Graham?" asked Mr. Mortimer.

"He is in my room," said St. George, "hunting up something about the currency. We are going to dine with John Mortimer to-morrow, before the lecture."

"Oh, he will go with you to the lecture, will he?" said Louisa.

"Yes; are you going?"

"We shall if Dorothea would like to go."

"There are to be some stunning illustrations, I can tell you," said Valentine, and Mr. Brandon withdrew.

"You'll see it reported in one of the county papers next Thursday," remarked Valentine. "St. George will figure as our talented What's-his-name. 'We have to report another successful effort from the son of that spirited magistrate and consistent *Pink*, who, living

not a hundred miles from Wigfield, in patriarchal comfort,' &c. Then at the end you will read how St. George held his audience enthralled, and surpassed himself in lively eloquence and appropriate illustration: 'We are happy to find that Mr. Brandon has entirely recovered after his late battle with the turbulent waves of the Atlantic, and that his adherence to the *Pink* cause in this borough is as staunch as ever.'"

"Sir, you are impertinent," said his father, who had taken care not to speak till he had finished all he had to say.

"Yes, father," replied Valentine, humbly, "I am sorry to say that is too often the case," and he shook his head and sighed.

Mr. Mortimer looked at me with an air of amusement, that seemed to say, Isn't he a funny young fellow? and continued—"Giles, sir, is an honour to us all; I wonder you are not proud of your elder brother."

"I am," answered Valentine; "I think it must be my being puffed up with pride about my relations that makes me so insufferable."

Mr. Mortimer now declared himself rested, and his two step-daughters bore him off, leaving Valentine and me to our task.

So we began to read, and I soon found myself in the position of instructress; his talent evidently was not for languages, and as a pupil I found him ab-

solutely provoking; he would not attend to his book; he stopped so often to talk—to compliment,—and in his horribly cracked voice to sing little snatches of songs, that at last we got into a decided dispute, for he was perfectly careless and indifferent, and I was very much in earnest. “Oh, come!” I exclaimed, as with a ridiculously broken voice he sang, “If she be not kind to me, what care I how fair she be!” “If you do not give your mind to what you are about, you will never come to any good.”

He stared at me with surprise.

I was fluttering the leaves of his lexicon, vainly investigating a point that he chose to consider settled, and the more I searched the more he sang, till at last, thoroughly roused, and rather indignant, I gave him a good scolding, and asked him what he could be thinking of to trifle away his time in that way?

He turned his clear eyes upon me, ceased to sing, and gradually arrived at the conclusion that I really was giving him a lecture, that I meant what I said, and that I really did regard the reading, not as play, but as work. So he withdrew his idle hand from his waistcoat pocket, took the book gravely from me, and went on construing for full ten minutes with exemplary care and a kind of urgency and energy that surprised me.

At the end of that time I heard footsteps, and saw a little smile begin to tremble over the lips of my

companion, but he did not pause till his brother came up and stopped before us; then he clapped to the book, and exclaimed with a burst of laughter, "She says I ought to be ashamed of myself."

"So you ought!" I answered, audaciously, but obliged to laugh too.

"She says I am not in earnest about anything, and that I shall certainly go to the dogs if I don't mend my ways."

"I uttered no such words, but I said what implied as much; and so I think."

When I saw Mr. Brandon's amused face, I felt suddenly ashamed of the warmth I had displayed, and the unguarded things I had said to my two days' acquaintance.

He put aside the pear boughs, came close, and sat down on a tree-stump at our feet, folding his arms and looking up at us.

"It appears that you and Miss Graham have been quarrelling?" he remarked.

"Not at all!" I replied; "but I was reading with your brother, and he would not give his attention to what he was about, so—" I hesitated.

"So you scolded him?"

"Yes," said Valentine, "she was in such a passion. She is quite flushed now, as you can see."

St. George glanced at my face.

"Well, Oubit," he said, "I hope you appreciate the compliment."

"Compliment! do you think I like to be scolded!"

"Don't you like that a lady should take enough interest in you to be vexed when you behave like a child?"

"The compliment was of my paying," said Valentine, with an easy smile; "I was naturally occupied with her and not with the lexicon, and she got quite indignant—roused—her eyes flashed, and she said such things! I declare she made my cheeks tingle. Miss Graham!"

"Yes."

"I declare I thought for a moment you were going to cry."

Oh! what an accusation of childishness, and I had meant to be so old in all my ways! I looked up, and Mr. Brandon met my eyes with a sweet and tender smile, such as one bestows sometimes on a dear child, and I thought how hard it was that I could neither look like a grown-up woman nor behave like one.

"I have often told you," he said to his brother, "that your want of earnestness is ruinous—deplorable! Now you have come in contact with an earnest nature which cannot endure trifling where grave interests are concerned, see how you have shocked it!"

"Well, I shall work harder next time," said Valentine, with easy good-nature, "but it's not my way to

be excited about things. I naturally am careless, I suppose."

"But you should strive against that defect, not state it complacently as a fact that you have nothing to do with."

"Well," he answered, "if Miss Graham would take me in hand, perhaps I could catch a little energy from her; I declare I felt quite elevated when she fired up; I experienced a kind of noble rage against myself and everything. If she could put me into a fury and reproach me every day, I could do anything."

"Probably Miss Graham has something better to do than to attend to your Greek."

I was glad of this proposal, and said I should like very much to read with him if he really meant to work, and would promise that there should be no more such ridiculous scenes as we had just enacted.

"What! you really will read with me?" he exclaimed.

"Yes,—of course; I scarcely ever have the least chance of being of use; I cannot think of throwing this little one away. It is so very unsatisfactory to live entirely for oneself."

"There! you got that notion out of a book,—that is the first thing I have heard you say that did not sound natural and real. 'My dear Lord, clear your mind of cant' (The Great Samuel.)"

His brother tried to snub him.

"How do you know what is natural to a conscientious person? That feeling—that notion does come out of a book, but not the sort of book you mean."

"I meant one of those books that Liz and Lou are so fond of crying over, where the people are so impossibly good and refined and conscientious, and yet so invariably miserable."

"Well, I hate those books too," he answered—"cold, low-spirited things."

Liz and Lou did not look as if their reading had depressed them, and I remarked that I thought so.

"You will change your mind when the next Mudie box comes; won't she, St. George?"

"Yes, and people unconsciously imitate what they admire, particularly when set before them in the guise of a superb young heroine, with dark eyes and perfect features that seldom relax into a smile, stern duty being all that remains to her,—love and hope and ease being tragically extinguished."

"Or of a fair girl all feeling," said the Oubit, sighing; "a creature so horribly conscientious that she nearly cries if a fellow does but read a line out of some heathen Greek without bending his whole soul to the task."

"I am not expected to recognise anyone that I know in the disguise of a girl all feeling!"

"I said a fair girl."

"And I am not fair and not all feeling. I was cross when you were so provoking, that was all."

"You are not fair?"

"No, I am not, and I do not say that to provoke a denial. I do not much care about appearances—at least——"

"That sentence began in a very promising manner," said Mr. Brandon; "but if you think you are not fair, how odd that you should not care?"

"You think, then, that if you were a woman you should care?"

"I am sure of it."

"Perhaps you are not thinking of what I meant."

"I was thinking of that delicacy, that attractiveness and grace—in short, of that beauty which distinguishes your sex."

"But I was only thinking of that beauty which distinguishes one of my sex over others."

"And I understand you to say that you do not care about it?"

"I do not think it would suit me at all. It would want taking care of, like any other gift of God; I should have to change my whole manner and conduct on purpose to harmonise with it. Yes, I think I am glad it is not mine."

"Your present style and manner, then, would not suit a beautiful young woman?"

"No, because it always shows that I am very desirous to please."

"Ah!" said Valentine, "and that you think if you were beautiful, would turn poor fellows' heads."

"You talk," said Mr. Brandon to me, "as if beauty was a fact, and not an opinion."

"It does not much matter which it is, if almost all agree as to its absence or presence."

"Very true," he answered, and laughed as if a good deal amused.

"I say, St. George," said Valentine, "I believe when Miss Graham made that incautious speech, she only meant that she didn't care what *you* and *I* thought of her face."

There was a pause.

"She cannot deny it. I'll give her while I count twelve to do it in."

I looked up at the tall boy and then down at Miss Dorinda's lover, and it seemed to me that there was no need to deny it. To have beauty and captivate Valentine would be very awkward, for I should not be captivated in my turn: to have it and be seen by Dorinda would perhaps make her tremble, and would certainly make her try to prevent my obtaining a friend.

"There!" said Valentine, "the numbers are counted out; 'She lives and makes no sign.'"

"You need not think my indifference is magnanimous, it is only natural."

Valentine laughed. "I know you consider me nothing but a boy, and I do not care, but really I think you are ten times better-looking than many—indeed, than most girls—far better-looking than Fanny Wilson, or Jane either."

A bell had been tinkling for some time, and I asked what it was, upon which they both rose, and saying that it was the lunch-bell, proposed that we should return to the house.

CHAPTER VI.

A lame black beetle preaching like a fish;
A squinting planet in a gravy dish;
Amorphous masses cooing to a monk;
Two fine old crusty problems very drunk
A pert parabola flirting with the Don;
And two Greek grammars with their war-paint on.

VALENTINE walked on before us, and set the boughs swinging as he passed. Mr. Brandon walked with me, and after a short silence, looking up, I saw that he was considering me with attention.

"I know you are not affected," he said. "And so," he continued, after another pause, "I feel sure that in talking of your face, as we have just been doing, you said what you really thought."

He spoke in a perfectly matter-of-fact way, and I replied—"Exactly so."

"I flatter myself that I am discerning," he went on; "but if you venture to say such things before some others of my sex, you will certainly be misunderstood."

I answered, "Your brother is not very discerning; yet he did not misunderstand, and he agrees with me evidently in opinion."

"Yes," he answered, and laughed, "I really think he does."

I wondered whether he meant to imply that he thought me pretty, but as I could not think of anything else to say, I asked, "What is Fanny Wilson like?"

"She has all the beauty inseparable from a very large fortune. Looked at apart from that, I should say she was a heavy-footed girl. Jane Wilson is a fine creature; she weighs about ten stone."

"A very proper weight, if she is tall. I rather envy her. If I were as heavy as that, I should never be afraid to go on deck, even in a stiff gale."

He laughed at the inconsistency of this speech with my professed indifference. So did I when he had pointed it out.

"If you envy, you are ungrateful," he continued, as dispassionately as if he had been speaking to his grandmother. It was just the sort of manner I thought that a man should have who, while his heart was given to one woman, felt called upon to tell another what

he thought of her face. "But I quite agree with you," he continued, "that beauty is of less consequence than some other advantages."

"Oh, then," I thought, "Dorinda is a plain girl, and he knows it."

"But if it is ridiculous for an ugly woman to give herself the airs of conscious beauty," he went on, "it is equally—almost equally—" At this word he paused, and seemed to consider, but not finding what he wanted, he presently attacked the subject in another place. "I think you are too much resolved to forget how very much people differ respecting beauty."

"If I thought they were likely to differ in my case I should not talk as I have done, because it would appear as if I did it to elicit a flattering assurance of dissent."

"That is exactly what I wanted you to say. It remains only to show that they do so differ—a remarkable thing certainly! but I am an instance of the difference I have suggested. My eyes justify me to myself, and in spite of all your convictions, I shall persist in my own, for if I had to point out one of the most attractive faces I ever saw—such is my perversity (such my bad taste that quiet smile seems to say) that I should undoubtedly and confidently mention yours."

He spoke so composedly and dispassionately, that for a moment I felt almost inclined to argue the point with him; but no, that would be no use, and I felt

that my intelligent theories on this point were upset. It was natural not to care for beauty if it was a mere circumstance in the possessor, but not if it was a cherished opinion in the beholder. I felt that the kind of attractiveness he had acknowledged was precious; it was quite inconsistent with the least disapproval or even indifference. My world was so very contracted that few people could know or care for me, and this glimpse so unconsciously given of the place I must have held in his memory filled me with elation.

"I have a friend," he presently said, "whom I should so much like you to see. I wonder what you would think of her face?"

"Do you consider her very beautiful, then?"

"Oh, no," he replied. "Oh, certainly not, but I consider the expression of her countenance heavenly!"

"And do you think it the reflection of her mind?"

"Yes."

"What is her name?"

"Miss Dorinda Braithwaite."

The name I had expected to hear, but I was struck, as I had been before, with the formal manner in which the whole family spoke of this girl.

We came in.

"Dick is here," said Lou; "he is come to lunch."

Dick, otherwise Richard à Court, was a small fair-haired young clergyman, who seemed to be on familiar terms with the whole family, and Mrs. Henfrey, taking

me and Tom into her confidence, let us understand that we were to make our lunch last as long as possible, because it would be Dick's dinner, and she was afraid he did not always have a good dinner when at home in his lodgings, because he gave away so much of his income in charity.

We were followed into the dining-room by a large awkward dog, who came slouching in with his head down, and an air of shame most evident and ridiculous.

Nobody took any notice of him at first, and he stood at the end of the table by Mr. Brandon's chair silent and shame-faced, but when the carving was over Aunt Christie exclaimed—"Why, there's old Smokey, I declare!"

The dog took no notice of her, and his master, leaning towards him, said, in a tone of friendly remonstrance, "Now, Smokey, what do you mean by this ridiculous behaviour? I am all right, old boy."

The dog, putting his paws on the arm of the chair, grunted out a few inarticulate sounds that seemed full of love and entreaty, whereupon the master said, "You know as well as I do that you have no business here. Don't I pay you a visit every day? and don't I always tell you that you are not to come and hunt me up in the house? Answer me that."

Smokey gave a yap, which was declared by the family to be his way of testifying assent.

"Oh, he's a wise beast," said Aunt Christie. "I never saw the match of him."

"Well," continued his master, "you can go to the magistrate, and ask if you may stop this once."

Thereupon the great creature came tearing round the table, barking furiously.

"Smokey wants to know if he may stop," said St. George.

"Well," answered the old man, looking down into the creature's eyes, "if he's a good dog, he may."

Perfectly understanding the permission, Smokey came back with a much more confident air, and pushing up his head under his master's arm contrived to impede the carving a good deal; going round if he was called to the various members of the family, and receiving doles from them with sober contentment, and making various little yaps, snuffles, and whines when talked to, which they declared had distinct meanings.

"They know we can talk," observed Liz, "so they pick up our tones, and pretend to do it, too. It's my belief that they think they do talk."

"They live in the presence of their gods," said Tom; "they ought to have one privilege more than we have to make amends."

"To make amends for the will of their Maker concerning them, you appear to mean," said Dick à Court, with a severe glance at Tom; and he began with great

sincerity, but in a wonderfully commonplace manner, to enlarge on the certainty that all the creatures are in their right places.

"Dick," said St. George, when this had been going on for rather a long time, "don't be didactic, there's a good fellow; you forget that we men have completely taken our favourites among the creatures out of the places we found them in."

"What does he say?" asked Mr. Mortimer, who had caught a few words.

St. George raised his voice a little, and replied, "I was telling Dick he mustn't be didactic; you're not used to that sort of thing, are you, my liege? you can't stand it."

"No, Dick, no; better not," said Mr. Mortimer, putting up his eye-glass and openly contemplating his step-son. "He is quite right, Dick; nobody's ever didactic here."

"We could not have taken them out of their places unless it had been ordained," said Dick.

"Then it was ordained, for we have done it; and we have filled them with yearnings towards us, and wants, and loves, that otherwise they never could have known."

"And we have demoralized them too in some respects," said Tom; "their love for us renders them unable to be faithful to one another."

"Yes," said Mr. Mortimer, to whom this was re-

peated, "Smokey would tear his own mother to pieces if she growled at Valentine or Giles."

"You think they are in much the same position that we should be," I asked, "if angels lived visibly on earth among us, and chose out little human children here and there to take to their homes and feed with angel's bread, and love and make much of?"

"Yes," said St. George; "and I am thankful we do not live with such a race."

"What contempt we should feel for one another if we did!" remarked Tom.

Little Dick actually gasped with horror at these two speeches. "What can you be thinking of to talk thus of such a blessed possibility?" he exclaimed.

"I talk according to my lights," said Tom; "and as it is not ordained that I should live with angels, surely I may say that I am glad."

"Call them angels—call them whatever you like," said St. George, "but if it is allowed that they are to be as much above us as we are above the dogs, I do not see how any higher religion than fealty to them could be possible to us."

"Besides," continued Tom, "such brutes as we have tamed are influenced not only by our acts but by our intentions. We intend that they shall stay in certain fields; we put a trumpery little paling round them, or a thin hedge, or a shallow ditch; they are not consciously obedient, but our will was that they

should stay there; they generally yield to this thought that was in our hearts when we made the barrier, and it becomes in consequence insuperable to them. It would be the same with us if we lived with our betters."

"Now, Smokey," said the master, in a confidential tone, to his slave, "we are going out for a walk, Smokey; we shall go through the yard. You had better look out." The dog retired with alacrity. "I am not at all sure," he went on, "that Smokey did not know we were talking of him and his people. I think he did, and felt sneaky in consequence."

Tom answered by broaching another of his favourite notions. It was his belief, he said, that human spirits were *perceptible* to most other intelligences, though not to their fellows. "We appear to ourselves only to animate these bodies, but to the consciousness of other creatures we spiritually overflow them. Just as the scents of flowers pervade their neighbourhood, emanations from our spirits float in our neighbourhood. That is another way in which dominion is secured to us."

"Then what do you think our souls look like?" asked Lou, quite seriously.

He hesitated.

"I should not wonder if they give out a sort of light," she continued. "They might, you know, though it might be too faint for our mortal eyes to see it."

Tom replied that he had not considered that part of the subject, and the party broke up. The men and dogs shortly went across country together, and Mr. Mortimer took Lou and me for a walk, through a pretty dingle, and then past the two cottages with green doors, finally to a deep natural rent, which in the Isle of Wight would have been called a chine. In one part it contracted so much that a bridge was thrown across it, and looking down as we stood on this bridge, we saw Tom sitting below us, smoking, on a hurdle, Mr. Brandon coming along at a good pace, evidently measuring the length of the hollow by his stride, and Mr. à Court setting down the results in a natty little note-book.

"What are you about, my dear St. George?" said Mr. Mortimer.

St. George not hearing, Valentine, who had joined us, shouted down the message. "Hi! father wants to know what you're up to."

Giles looked up and laughed, lifting his hat to us, and pointing out an old woman, who was coming to meet us. He then went striding on under the bridge, and I saw why he had become a different person. Our friend of the yacht always used to put his feet to the ground with peculiar caution, and liked to wear slippers whenever he could. Even at Chartres he always stepped as lightly as possible, and with a caution which altered his gait.

The old woman, who was very comfortably dressed, and was evidently in great indignation, came up to Mr. Mortimer, and in her country dialect demanded his assistance. It was just what Valentine had said in joke the night before. "Do'ee speak to the young landlord," she implored.

Mr. Mortimer leaned down his grand white head and listened with all courtesy. "He was so *masterful*, nobody could do anything with him." And she went grumbling on. "Times, and times, and times he had chevied her pigs over the bridge; ay, times and times, when they were feeding in the stubble, and she never said a word. So had Master Valentine, as he very well knew."

I thought she spoke, and Mr. Mortimer listened to the account of these delinquencies, as if they might have taken place about the day before yesterday.

"Boys will be boys!" he remarked.

"Ay, so they would; but this was different, and he was not to chevy her pigs while they were fatting in the sty. He and the young sailor gentleman had chevied them ever so, just to see where the drains went; but it was flying in the face of Providence to clean up her pigs; they wouldn't fat unless they were dirty."

"I'm sure I don't know what is to be done," said Mr. Mortimer, "as these cottages belong to him."

"And did he think, then, that he was to have the

cleaning up of this *mucky* old world? The world was nat'rally dirty. She didn't mean to say but what he was a good landlord, but full of fads, full of fads—would have it that her pigstyes *confected* the little spring that the folks drank of further down, and *actilly* wanted to turn the drainage the other way. Do'ee talk to him, sir."

"It won't be a bit of use," said Mr. Mortimer. "But I know if he does any damage to your pigs, he will make it up to you."

The old lady retired, grumbling as she went.

Valentine did not let me forget our bargain that I was to read Greek with him. We set to work the very next day, directly after breakfast, and which of us it amused the most I hardly know, but certainly it amused all the other members of the family, for those who did not sit in the room came in and out and made frequent observations on us.

Just as we had nearly finished, a little shower fell, and Tom and Mr. Brandon, who had intended to go out with us, came to condole; for a walk was a delightful treat to me, one for which nothing else could compensate.

"I seem to contract a sort of sense of freshness from this fellow," observed Mr. Brandon of Tom; "I find the world looking newer than usual when I walk about with him."

It was a lovely sunshiny shower that was coming

down; it seemed to fill the space between us and the tall trees, so ghostly white, with confusing light and sparkling lines. Tom and I sat and watched it.

"This is better than anything we saw this winter in the tropics," I remarked to him.

"I wonder how you employed yourself all those months while you were at sea," said Mrs. Henfrey to me.

"You could not have been always looking at the sunsets," observed Valentine.

"Particularly in the morning," Lou put in.

"No. Sometimes I wrote. I found writing a great resource."

"Ah! you wrote. To your friends?"

"I have no friends."

"*You ain't got no friends! Hurrah!* You will think the more of us, then," said Valentine. "Was it a novel that you wrote?"

"Yes."

"With a motto to every chapter," said Tom. "The ladies always take care of that. She wrote the mottoes first, and then put the chapter to suit them."

"And the first motto," said St. George, "was 'All the world's a *ship*, and all the men and boys are merely *sailors*.'"

"But," proceeded Valentine, "the love-scenes were most heart-rending."

Here I was impelled to say, that I had not got so far as the love-scenes.

"Ay, but don't be so shy about it," exclaimed Aunt Christie. "I'm sure writing was a very pretty occupation for ye. What was the hero like, my dear?"

"The hero was a terrible trouble; he wasn't natural. I saved up a great many wise things for him to say, but I could not get him to be interesting."

"Then of course he was not anything like me," said Valentine.

"No, he was not in the least like you."

"Was he at all like me?" said Mr. Brandon; and here I observed a certain keenness of interest in the listeners, who all seemed a good deal amused.

"Oh no, not at all."

"That's odd," he answered; "only think of the interesting circumstances under which I came before you; but," he added gently, and as if the reflection pleased him, "he must have been a prig, of course! I know the hero was a prig."

"But he was very handsome," said Valentine. "I think he had brown eyes, and a fair complexion."

"Yes, he was rather fair; but," I continued, trying to justify myself, for I saw they were all laughing at me, "as I could not make him natural, I gave him as many other advantages as I could; his defect was that he was too good, so I made him a clergyman. I used

to like his remarks when I made him say them, but when I looked at them afterwards I thought he preached."

"And about what age was he?" asked Valentine.

"About the age that heroes generally are."

"That is to say, about my age?" said Mr. Brandon, in a persuasive tone. "I think I must be right in saying he was about my age?"

"Oh no, he was not nearly so old."

"So old!" he exclaimed, with sudden vehemence and interest.

Surely, I thought, he does not consider himself a young man now; and Valentine remarked, in a dispassionate tone, "Why, you're nearly thirty, Giles—at least six years too old for a hero. An old man," he murmured, "and his wits are not so——."

"He isn't," exclaimed Mrs. Henfrey, indignantly; "he's just in the early prime of life."

"I was never the right age for a *handsome* hero," he replied, half laughing; but I saw plainly that he did not like our considering him old.

"Well, that's as people think," continued his champion; "nobody can deny that he has the handsomest mouth and teeth in the family;"—she looked round upon us as she said this;—"or in the room either," she concluded; and, with a chorus of laughter, we all declared that we agreed with her.

He replied that when he had his portrait painted

for her, he would have the most made of his one good feature. "It shall be painted as large as possible," he assured her.

"Well, I must say I would like to get a look at this novel," said Aunt Christie.

"I have read part of it," observed Tom. "She expected me to set her right when she took a young family to sea. She asked me one day whether there was any difference between *wearing* and *tacking*. Her genius shines most brightly in seafaring matters. It always did."

"But I've burnt the novel," I pleaded; "you know I burnt it, Tom."

"And what for?" said Mrs. Henfrey; "what does it signify whether there's any difference between them or not?"

"I wanted it to be right; besides, the hero being quite in the grand style, I could not let him make mistakes. And then there is so much variety in nature, and if you want to make a vivid picture so many things have to be put in, I did not know what to choose. For instance, if I were writing of Tom, ought I, beside telling his height and appearance, to add that during this conversation he has been gently slapping the palm of his hand with an ivory paper-knife? or that Mr. Brandon, sitting by Aunt Christie (who has a green plaid gown on), has been leaning back on the couch and judiciously kicking the heavy tassel which

hangs out from the corner of her square footstool, so as to keep it always going like a pendulum?"

"If I had been your hero," retorted the last-named of the two victims, "you would, in recording that little action, have taken care to add, 'but whatever he did became him.' However," he added, in a tone of deep reflection, "I think, on the whole, I am glad not to be the hero of a lady's novel. Do you think you could draw my character, Miss Graham? Should I come out a gentle muff in your hands, I wonder? Or a prig, with a dash of the dissenting minister?"

"I intend to be the hero of your next novel," said Valentine; "I have quite made up my mind to that."

"No, not the *next*," said Tom, basely betraying me. I was terribly tormented by them all when they found out that I had begun another, especially when being hard pressed by questions I was obliged to admit that I had stopped short because I could not think of any more scenes; in fact, to collect more materials.

"Ah, I wish we had Emily with us still," observed Aunt Christie, when they had quizzed me to their hearts' content; "there were materials for anybody that could use them."

"Yes, she was always in mischief," said Valentine, bringing out his sister in a light that I had not expected, "and always getting me into scrapes."

"She and Giles between them," said Mrs. Henfrey, in her usual dispassionate tone.

"Do ye mind, Giles," said Aunt Christie, "my seeing you and Emily helping the Oubit to write his exercise? The à Courts have never forgiven you, I suppose?"

"Nor ever will," he answered, "excepting Dick."

"Ah," said Aunt Christie, "one on one side, and one on the other of the dear innocent (as he was then). 'What are you all about?' I said, when I saw him with his little elbows squared on the table."

"Then old à Court should not have set me such foolish lessons," said Valentine; "how was such a little fellow to write compositions on Truth and Probity, and all that stuff? But he never would have found out that Giles and Emily did the answers unless they had put the last in verse."

"Oh, yes he would," said Aunt Christie, "for I remember your telling your mother so prettily that he was very cross, and said the essay was all nonsense, and now you might write a composition on nonsense and see what you could make of that."

"And Emily told me to say it was a squinting planet in a gravy-dish," said Valentine, "and then Giles wrote the other lines."

"But I don't see that this account of our delinquencies will be of any use to Miss Graham," said

Mr. Brandon; "these materials are not at all 'in the grand style.'"

"But if she does not hear the end," said Tom, "we may, perhaps, think it worse than it was."

"The end was that we wrote an essay, and a definition to follow. Toward the end I put in this unlucky line:—

'Two fine old crusty problems very drunk.'

And old à Court fancied these some allusion to himself and his brother, which of course we had never dreamed of."

"He got it all out of me," said Valentine, "and came to my father absolutely sputtering and dancing with passion. 'How dare they say such things of me—drunk, indeed! when was I ever known to disgrace my cloth? A pert parabola flirting with a Don—scandalous! insufferable! I'll never enter these doors again; I *never will*, unless they most humbly apologize.'"

"Yes," observed Mrs. Henfrey, with all composure, "some of the lines were unlucky, but making them apply to him never entered their giddy heads. My father was a good deal vexed," she added, calmly.

"No wonder," exclaimed Mr. Brandon. "How he did lecture us, dear old man! and trotted us both over to apologize. Emily spoke first, and repeated a little speech that he had composed for her; and then I.

We were old enough to have known better; I was nearly nineteen; she was sixteen. My youthful dignity was sorely hurt; I felt that life was hardly worth having under circumstances of such ignominy, but while I was blundering through my apology, feeling unutterably foolish, Emily suddenly burst into an ecstatic little chuckle, and in spite of all my struggles, I presently laughed too. After that the case was perfectly hopeless, and the families have been estranged ever since."

"And I was taken away from Mr. à Court, and sent to Old Tikey," observed Valentine, "for I was always too delicate to go to school. Giles and Emily have a great deal to answer for. I never got on so well as with him. What a comfort I might have been to my family but for them!"

I soon after got Valentine to give me these important lines, and have not "let them die." The shower passing off, we went up to dress for a walk, but while (being ready first) I sat waiting in the morning room for the others, Mr. Brandon entered, and walking up to the sofa leaned over me gravely—"Scene for the novel," he said. "'And as she stood at the foot of the stairs, she looked up, and saw Amontillado about to descend. He was dressed for dinner in his usual swallow-tail coat, and had his clean pocket-handkerchief, slightly scented with Eau de Cologne, doubled up in his hand, but on this

festive occasion he had added nothing to the adornments she always saw him in, excepting one small sprig of myrtle stuck in behind each ear. That sight made an indelible impression on her memory.'"

"He was not in the least *in that style*," I exclaimed; "he was very manly, I assure you, and exceedingly strong."

"Oh! *another scene for the novel*—'When he heard these trenchant words, he sprang into the air as if he had been shot, then tearing up a young tree in his desperation, he flung it into the river, vaulted on it instantly as on a steed, and waving his hand while he curbed the fiery exogen, he bade her farewell, and rode swiftly down the raging torrent till she lost sight of him. Then, as she turned away, she said, "I wish I hadn't done it." ' Do you like these scenes?" he continued; "I've just composed them."

If I had had the sense to keep these scenes to myself there would have been an end of them, but I could not help telling them to Valentine, and the consequence was, frequent other scenes more or less ridiculous.

Some time during that afternoon I asked what the lecture was to be about, and was told it was an account of one of the New Zealand Settlements, and its object, of course, was to recommend emigration.

Liz and Lou had made some gigantic pictures of the trees, scenery, produce, native huts, &c. Their

brother had been over twice already, they said, and had been coming home the second time across America when we fell in with him.

He and Tom came in while we were all looking at the illustrations. I held a picture of a wild raging torrent which a man on horseback was fording.

"That is your humble servant," he said. "These two pictures ought to be labelled 'Contentment' and 'Terror.' 'Contentment' represents a man with a long pipe in his mouth roasting some animal at the end of a stick."

"Were you frightened, then, when you crossed the torrent?"

"Frightened! I quaked in my shoes. My horse got snagged, and uttered a groan, poor beast, that often rings in my ears yet. I was ducked once, but rose close to the murderous snag, and sat and held by it for a couple of hours. Those torrents come by suddenly. When this one had spent its force, and I ventured down from my perch, the water was so full of pebbles that by the time I had struggled to the bank I was beaten black and blue."

"Shall you tell that anecdote at the lecture?"

"Why not? I consider it rather a taking one."

"I should have thought it was enough to prevent anybody from going. Did you visit the country intending to settle?"

"No; I went in the service of one Jenny Wilkes,

as her purveyor of stores, guardian, paymaster, autocrat, and likewise slave."

"A remarkable place; did you prove equal to its duties?"

"It is not for me to boast, but I should confidently expect a good character if I applied to Jenny."

"As autocrat I can fancy you might play your part well, but as slave——"

"Might you be looking out for the latter article, madam? My late mistress will speak well of me."

"No," I answered, laughing; "I only asked from curiosity."

"You'll please to understand," said Mrs. Henfrey, "that *my lord* was only three-and-twenty when he took out a lot of women and girls, and he would have it that there was nothing odd in it at all."

"No!" exclaimed Tom.

"Yes," said Mr. Brandon, "it does strike me as rather droll now, but I did it."

"As their slave?"

"Yes, and I make a capital slave when I am treated with due deference. I can nurse children, snare and shoot and cook game, milk cows, and otherwise comport myself like a gentleman and a man of title. My title, bestowed on me by Jenny and her set, was almost exactly like that of the Emperor of Russia. He is called Czar, I was called Zur; there's no difference worth mentioning."

"I wonder who Jenny Wilkes was?"

"She was a washerwoman."

"A washerwoman?"

"Yes, indeed."

"And may I inquire on behalf of this assembly," said Tom, "by virtue of what charm she made you her slave?"

"You certainly may; her charms were her eleven comely children—seven fine girls and four chubby urchins of boys."

"More evidence is required to make the case intelligible."

"Know then that, to use her own language, Jenny washed and clear-starched for this family; but Jenny had a drunken husband who used to pawn the clothes for drink, and this happened so often that our patronage was withdrawn. That was seven years ago, and then the husband for a time was more sober, and worked at his trade of gardening, but he was a bad fellow, and sometimes left her for months together, and she got on as well as she could, which was very badly. At last the man died; after he was buried I went to see Jenny. She was, as the neighbours say, 'taking on' sadly. I thought she was crying for her husband. So I told her that for her children's sake she must bear up. 'Oh, bless you, Zur,' she cried, sobbing afresh, 'it's not *that*—but whatever am I to do? for now my neighbour has got the washing at the hall, and I can't

have it back, and I've nothing to put in their mouths nor on their backs.' So when I heard that I took a chair and sat down, and I remarked upon her good-looking daughters fast growing up—the eldest eighteen. I talked of husbands for them; work for herself; good pay. In short, I enlarged upon all that I had ever said, but with little success hitherto. To my surprise the widow started a new objection. She was sure she should get lost; she never could find the way; likewise, she remarked, that in going through these forests she should lose some of the children. In vain I reasoned with her, told her that there was no way for her to find, no forest to traverse. She recurred to the fear lest she should be lost. At last I said, 'Jenny, do you suppose *I* am able to find the way?'

"'Oh, ay, she thought as how I could; she was sure on't, and if I was going she would be none afraid.'

"'Very well,' I said, 'then I am going.' It had only just occurred to me, that I was about to spend two years in touring and travelling, and why not in that direction as well as in any other? So the bargain was struck. I was paymaster of course, but I was willing to pay for success; but the worst of it was, that no sooner was the thing known than two more women came trudging up to the house, 'had heard as how that I was agoing to take out Widow Wilkes, and their *masters* was willing, and they had but five children

a-piece; would I take out all of them?' I did take them all. That is, I took a passage for them, and a passage for myself in the afterpart of the same vessel. How the women and girls quarrelled! I shall never forget it. I was governor and umpire. They were all ill at first, happily, and nothing worse befell than the continuous squalling of the children. When the seasickness was over I set up a school, taught writing, arithmetic, morals, manners, and geography; gave lessons in chess, draughts, and dominoes, and kept the peace as well as I could. I had paid dear for my success; I had persuaded somebody to emigrate, and I was taking the consequences. Well, we landed in Wellington Harbour. I had engaged to remain three months, and then, if they wished it, to take them back again. The two men got into capital situations very soon, and went with their employers a few miles up the country. I had no more trouble with them. But Jenny Wilkes and her daughters caused me a world of misery, and sometimes made me feel heartily ashamed of my ridiculous position as their guardian. Jenny donned a red bonnet, and gave herself the airs of a young girl. The daughters put on their best frocks, and marched about at my heels, for if I was obliged to leave the den of an inn where we were, I was sure to find some ruffianly-looking gold diggers, come over from Nelson, trying to make themselves agreeable; so I had to take the girls with me, and if I had been the

wickedest young fellow in the world, I could not have felt more ashamed of myself than I did the first few days after we landed.

"I then found a respectable place to lodge them in, something between a store and an eating-house. I looked out for situations for the girls, but as lovers began to present themselves, they were not easy to please, and I soon found that my troubles would not be over till I had married the two elders. The mother's head was turned, and she seemed incapable of looking after the young fry; so one evening I called her outside the house to lecture her. 'Mrs. Wilkes,' I began—'Mrs. Muggins, if you've no objection, sir,' she replied, and to my astonishment I found she had married the host, a fat fellow, making money fast, and sorely in want of somebody to manage him. He came out after her, looking hot and flurried. 'Marry you, Jenny? what, with all your children!' I exclaimed.

"'Yers,' said Mr. Muggins, with his hands in his pockets, 'I've stepped into it; some men *air* lucky; my first wife was a fortune to me; but she was nothing to this——'

"Jenny retreated precipitately, and gave her youngest son a cuff, perhaps caused by embarrassment.

"Mr. Muggins looked on admiringly.

"'Four fine boys,' said he. 'I've been going to buy land and go up the country; but I haven't managed it. Four fine boys to help! yers, I'll go and

do it now. My first wife, sir, was nothing to this; why a duchess is nothing to her.'

"'Mr. Muggins,' said I, following his lead, 'you've stepped into a good thing; prove yourself worthy of it.'

"'And the girls, sir,' proceeded Mr. Muggins. 'O my gracious! they'll help their mother right and left, in-doors and out.'

"Well, Mr. Muggins did buy land. Whatever faults his step-daughters may have had, they did not want for activity, and he soon found he had only to provide money, and he was taken in hand, washed for, cooked for, clear-starched for, his bargains made, his cart driven, his cows bought and milked. I saw him two days before I embarked for Sydney. 'If it wasn't that Mary Jane and Melia are going to marry,' said he, 'I should think myself in paradise; but their mother, sir, she's here, there, and everywhere; and them blessed boys, they run of all her errands, and they chop wood, and they feed the poultry. O my gracious goodness! Good bye, sir, and God bless you.'"

We dined at five that day, that there might be time to drive to the town afterwards and hear the lecture. Mr. Brandon and Tom went to dine with Mr. John Mortimer, as well as Valentine; and Lou, Lizzy, and I went over after dinner in the carriage. I must say I felt a strong degree of curiosity and interest, and when we stopped at a door in a dirty-looking

back street, and saw a good many working men hanging about, I exulted quite as much as Liz and Lou did in the prospect of a crowded audience.

We entered a somewhat dirty school-room; it was large, bare, and very empty. Our spirits fell. "Dear me, I wish the people would come pouring in," said one. "Where shall we sit, so as to make the greatest show?" asked the other. "Spread your gown out, Dorothea, and cover as much of the bench as you can."

The benches near us were perfectly empty. As we had driven along, the girls had told me that the last time Giles had lectured there he had been hissed. I felt indignant; how dared they do it! but I only said, "Indeed, and why?"

They thought it was because Giles was so uncompromising, so fearless in speaking his mind. I asked whether Mr. Mortimer would be present.

"Oh, no," said Liz. "Papa says he dare not, lest they should hiss again; he took it very much to heart. O, here come two women and a boy. Lou, dear, the gallery is beginning to fill. There are seven children in it. And see; here come some of the navvies."

"But why did they hiss?"

"Papa thinks the farmers close to our village hate Giles, because some of their labourers had emigrated through his means. More people, Lou; we shall do now."

We now sat silent, for the room was rapidly filling. Labourers stalked in, pulled off their hats, and stroked down their hair, settled themselves with a hand on each knee, and grinned. Fat old women disposed themselves in knots in the cosiest corners, and scolded boys and girls as they went up into the gallery, which was not an ordinary flight of steps such as in most schools goes by that name, but a real one like the gallery of a church, and evidently favoured by the youthful portion of the audience as a good place for seeing in, and being in some degree out of the way of interference from their elders.

At last the room was full; a brace of fairhaired young curates stood leaning in the doorway, and a stern-looking schoolmaster, with a long white wand, marched about below and looked up into the gallery, in which by this time at least a hundred children were seated. "There's Dick à Court," said Lou.

Mr. Brandon now appeared with the vicar of the town. They mounted a little platform on which stood a reading-desk covered with a cloth, and surmounted by the usual supply of cold water and tumblers. The vicar proceeded to make a little speech laudatory of the lecturer. This speech abounded in such words as "thrilling;" it also enlarged on the *condescension* of the lecturer in taking the trouble to amuse and instruct the classes below him. Under the infliction of the vicar's praise, the lecturer tossed back his hair by a

quick, impatient movement of the head, his nostrils widened, and, if I am not mistaken, he uttered something like a defiant snort; the vulgarity and bad taste of the speech was gall and wormwood to him, but he stood manfully till it was over, and as the vicar descended and edged his way out of the room, he came a step or two forward, cleared his lowering brow, and gave the audience a gracious smile which seemed to claim acquaintance with them; and then, instead of beginning to read his lecture, his eyes pierced the gloomy depths of the gallery, and, to the surprise of the assembly, he said,—“Stand up, boys in the gallery, and girls too.” With an obedient scraping and rustling, all the children rose.

“My boys,” said Giles, “last week when I heard a lecture here you made a great noise; a very great noise and cheering. Now I know it is a pleasure to you to do it—in short, that is what you come for, if I am not mistaken,” (the faces of the fathers and mothers below broke into broad smiles)—“and I don’t want to deprive you of it altogether, merely to desire that you will never begin it. If your elders choose to applaud you may help, but when they are silent you must not make a noise. Sit down.”

Down they all sat, but in the very act they caught a low patting of feet and soft clapping of hands, which I believe the two curates began, and which ran through the room directly. Up started the children; here was

the desired signal; they stamped, cheered, and made a downright hubbub, while the audience laughed and enjoyed the joke; again and again the running fire of claps broke out below, and the exulting voices of the children echoed it, while the lecturer, who began to look rather out of countenance, stood waiting for permission to begin. At last, the two curates, contented with their work, took up their hats, gave Giles a cheerful nod, and with innocent countenances blandly departed after their vicar.

There was nothing particular, I think, in the opening of the lecture, and if there had been I should not have noticed it, for my ears had other work than listening to mere words, however significant. Just as the people were settling themselves in their seats, and the first sentence was uttered, I had heard behind Lou a very low, soft hiss, a sound that I should hardly have been conscious of if Lou had not started and looked hurriedly round.

At first Giles was decidedly nervous; perhaps he too had heard this soft hiss. However that might be, he betrayed by his countenance that he was not content, not excited, and consequently not able to excite his audience and fix their attention on himself.

I was beginning to feel disappointed, and was at the same time angry with myself for fearing that it was stupid and dull, when having waded through his exordium, he began to warm with his subject, his voice

changed, softened, grew deeper and richer, his countenance and all his attitudes altered, his words came faster, and his audience began to lift up their faces and cease to cough and fidget.

My eyes, like theirs, were drawn to gaze at him, and forget everything else. He had raised himself into a higher place than he was wont to occupy; his voice was wanted to calm the agitation that he had caused, and to answer the questions that he was asking. There was a sort of passion in all his actions, and as I listened I felt for the first time the full meaning of the expression, "His eloquence carried him away." The world, as he went on, seemed to lie before us, great and fair as God has made it, and as if we were looking on while it rolled majestically in its pathway, showing all its hills and valleys to its Maker by turns. Voices seemed to be floating up from it to His Throne, not only the base, ungrateful cries of wounded pride, and disappointed ambition, and wearied idleness and jaded vice, but the sighs of the overtasked, the moaning of hungry children, and the complaints of fathers and mothers who see them pine for want of food and warmth. To the picture of this great crowd, and the gasping of those who are trampled down, he contrived to give such reality, that the listeners were oppressed, as if they themselves wanted breathing-room, and had been thrown down among these restless throngs. As for me, I felt helpless among the jostling multitudes, and de-

rived a vivid sense of the worthlessness of the items in one another's eyes where the aggregate is so vast, and the small count set by the poor and the unready, and the grinding of the poor by the rich, and the snatching of the poor from one another, and the piled-up houses and unrefreshing air and smoky sky. I wished to get away; and all at once we *were* away. He exclaimed, "We have done with this now; let us go!" I think I see the vessel still; her great swooping white sails, hovering over the fresh sea, like wings that God taught man to make that he might flee away and be at rest. We were away in some great silence.

And now the vessel had left us, we were sitting on some towering hill, and this was the fresh world lying at our feet, stretching out into great valleys where solitary creatures feed, wading knee-deep in grass; and wide open pastures where nothing moves but the shadows of the clouds, and mountains veined with ore, and forests where nations of birds build, and where the trees rock in the windy sky, and shed their fruits which there are few to gather.

Stepping away along those open wastes, one of that company might penetrate at last to some sheltered nook and hear the sound of the ringing axe with joy; he would not listen unheeded; the solitary workers want him. "Come and help us, man," is all their cry; "you may not be wise, but you are company for us; you may not be strong, but you are willing. Come and

help us, woman; be a wife here, and choose among urgent suitors; be a mother, and see all your children welcome and cherished as the best gifts of a bountiful Providence. What! as they sit hard at work in the old country do they sigh when they set foot on the cradle-rockers, and fear that even to its own father the crying babe is a burden that he knows not how to bear? Cast in your lot with us, and no such fear shall ever clutch at your heart; the father shall exult in every child you bring him as the means of riches and comfort, a new workman, a fresh companion, another helper."

Of course I only give the impression he conveyed, not the words; the power of these, and of the dilated eyes and impassioned voice, I remember well; but they are not to be conveyed in language. When his pictures were all finished and held up before the audience, his arms dropped at his side, and all the vehemence with which he had spoken seemed to depart from him. His eyes were seeking the upturned faces of the audience, and after a long pause he went on slowly, dropping the manner by which he had gained the mastery, and taking to a quiet tone, "'Suffer me a little, and I will show you that I have yet to speak on God's behalf.' If men crowd their fellows, God has made for the oppressed a fair green wilderness. If men care not for the poor, God has cared, and spread a wide inheritance for them, watered it for them when they knew

not of it, and made it ready. If"—no more words reached me—for close at my back came the sound I had dreaded—a long hiss, clear, though low. It seemed to electrify Giles; he stopped instantly, but only for a moment, and with face turned in that direction, and attentive ears, plodded through the remainder of his sentence, and allowed it to come to an end with a long pause, which seemed to invite a repetition of the hiss. It did not come, and he began another, under cover of which the hiss was repeated, and a faint murmur of "Shame" came from the unlighted corners of the room.

I was too much frightened to look round, and Liz and Lou shook visibly on their bench. For an instant there was a dead silence. Giles was searching the bench behind us with his penetrating eyes, and I saw that he had found what he wanted; for, his countenance cleared, he kept them fixed on some one close to us, and slowly closing his MS. notes, he folded his arms, and said, with particular force and clearness,—

"If the man who just now interrupted me will rise, I shall be glad to speak to him."

No answer—no sound behind us, but a little uneasy rustling.

"Martin Churt!"

I declare the words seemed to strike me on the face, they were so firmly spoken, and aimed so directly behind me.

"Martin Churt, I know you can speak—I have

heard you myself; did I interrupt you so?" He carried his eyes round the room, repeating, "Did I?" And several men's voices answered, "Noa, that thee didn't, zur."

"Martin," continued Giles, in a more colloquial tone, "if I were you, I would stand up and say what I had to say; you could not have a better opportunity. Get on the bench, man, and have it out." (There was now a sound at our back of hard breathing and puffing, as if some gentleman of the lower sort might be holding down his head and dabbing his face with his handkerchief.)

"It is true that these good fellows and these good women came to give a hearing to me," continued Giles; "but I dare say they can spare a little time for you. You could speak on Sunday afternoon, when I heard you holding forth on the common. Get up and let us hear the sound of your voice now."

"Ay, ay, let us," shouted a voice from the corner; "fair play be a jewel."

"You told the people then that there was no God; the more fool you to say it, and they to listen, when you know as well as they do that there is a God, and a good one. Now I am telling them that our good God has made the world large enough for all his creatures. Well, man, what have you to say against that?"

Somebody started up behind us now, jumped on

the bench, and a coarse voice blurted out, "There's a mort o' things moight be said, if a chap knowed how to speak his mind,—things goes wrong, and them rascally upper classes——."

Here he paused and cleared his throat; but he had lost his advantage by this hesitation, for a loud voice bawled out behind us with a countrified twang, "Good Lord, if he be'ant a-calling out agin them upper classes agen, haw, haw, haw!"

Roars of coarse laughter followed; the most exquisite wit could not have excited more ecstatic applause. It seemed to be more alarming to poor Lou than the unfriendly hiss, for she shook in every limb, and presently turned so pale that Liz made a sign to me that we must leave the room; and not without extreme reluctance I rose and followed them.

The little door at which Giles and the clergyman had entered stood ajar, and was close to us; before the navvies had done exercising their lungs in laughter, we had passed through it, and shut it behind us. How vexed I was!

Liz and I were both very cross, and did not fail to give Lou a little wholesome scolding, under the infliction of which she presently began to cry, and then to recover herself. Meanwhile we longed to go back, especially as the noise in the lecture-room increased; however, we did not think we could do that with propriety, so we listened at the crack of the door,

but we could not make out much. And after a short time, it was evident that St. George was again master of the field, and was going on with his lecture. It was very dull, and rather dark in the little room to which we had retreated. There was one candle, which was guttering down in the tin candlestick, for there was a strong draught; and by its light we pursued the only occupation that the room afforded. We examined the dingy maps that hung on the walls.

At last it was evident that the assembly was dispersing, and presently after Mr. Brandon came to us with Valentine and Tom.

Lou went up to her brother as if in some alarm for his safety, laid her hands on his shoulders, and looked anxiously in his face, but did not meet with any sympathy, only a pinch on the cheek, and "How could you be such a goose, Lou, dear? Miss Graham, were you afraid?"

"Afraid!—no. Oh, I was just for an instant at first."

"Why should she have been?" said Lou. "Your being ridiculed or hissed out of the room are not of the same consequence to her."

"Lou, I conscientiously believe that you would have been just as much frightened if the lecturer had been a perfect stranger to you."

"Were not you frightened yourself?"

“No, I foresaw it all along, and at first it hampered me; but I had to exert myself a good deal after you were gone, and the room became frightfully hot; so I think you must make room for me inside the trap.”

It is remarkable how much men despise close carriages, and what disrespectful epithets they invent for them. Mr. Brandon, on taking his place with us, took care to remark that he only did so because he had to speak the next night at some meeting or other, and therefore, as it poured with rain, and he had no great coat, it behoved him to take precautions not to catch a cold.

Great interest was expressed about Tom and Valentine; the latter, on account of his whooping-cough, was not to return in the open dog-cart; so he and Tom had procured a chaise, and were in our rear. It was very dark, and Liz and Lou vainly searched the darkness for them, and were sure the driver had deposited them in the ditch. This fear I did not share, and I wished somebody would mention the lecture, but no one did.

Mr. Brandon had settled himself in his corner, and held his peace. And when Liz and Lou had ascertained that we and the fly had safely passed the ditch, they were silent too, till within ten minutes of our reaching home, when we heard shouts behind us, and the carriage stopped. We let down the window, and Tom's voice shouted from the fly, “Valentine

says, what are we to say about the hissing to his father?"

"Tell him to say nothing, but go to bed, and leave me to manage it," replied Giles; "and, Graham——."

"All right. I hear——."

"If the subject can be staved off till to-morrow, I shall be glad."

CHAPTER VII.

SEBASTIAN.—Look! he's winding up the watch of his wit; by-and-by it will strike.—*The Tempest.*

THE next day I observed that a profound silence was observed on the subject of the lecture, and Mr. Mortimer, who was supposed to be in low spirits, received more than the usual attention from his children. Every one secretly pitied him, and there was a talk in the family that Tom and Mr. Brandon were to go over to a neighbouring town to choose a present for his birthday. This delicate attention, it was thought, might divert his mind from his mortification; and when I asked Valentine what the present was to be, he replied that he only knew it was to be appropriate to the day,—consequently it would of course be a tankard."

"Why?" I asked; "why a tankard?"

"Because the day is muggy."

"I don't believe you invented that joke yourself, it does not sound at all original."

"Doesn't it? Well, perhaps I did not, then; but I seemed to think I did."

"I suppose you have not forgotten that I proposed to read with you?"

"Not at all. I cannot go out of doors in such weather, so I'll read all day if you like."

"Pity you give such a bad reason for a good action."

"Would you have me give a good reason for a bad action instead? as the Feejee islander did, when he threatened to leave off eating Englishmen altogether, because their flesh tasted so of salt."

He then began, in a fitful sort of way, to read and construe, while Liz and Lou sat by at work; and Mrs. Henfrey alternately read her novel and listened to our frequent sparring.

"I wish I knew what old Giles was talking about," he exclaimed, when, the rain having ceased, he saw his father and Mr. Brandon sauntering along a gravel-walk, and talking.

"Old" in some families is a term of opprobrium; but, as used by Valentine, it was generally supposed to express affection.

"What should he be talking of?" said Lou.

"He's such an old patriarch," continued Valentine. "Why, he's talking of me, to be sure. I know he is. Now, Miss Graham, you never heard me cough, did you?"

"No, not once."

"What business is it of his, then, if I do cough at night? How he found out that I do, I can't think. Am I to be spied out, and cockered up, and blanketed all my days?"

"What has St. George been doing?" asked one of the girls.

"Doing! Why just after I got into bed last night, he marched into my room hauling a great blanket after him, and carrying a candle. A happy instinct warned me of what he was after, so when he spoke I did not answer a word, for I knew if I stirred a limb, or even wagged a finger, I should begin to cough. So I lay like a log, and we stared at each other with cheerful persistency. He set down his candle (only consider my helpless condition, I could not throw so much as a pillow at him!) and he began to examine the bed-clothes; said curtains were unwholesome; and it was no use trying to harden myself by having only one blanket, when I was wheezing like an old broken-winded horse. So he took his blanket, laid it over, and, as he stood leaning against the bed-post preaching at me, he ignominiously tucked it in with his foot. If I was a pet felon in gaol, I could not be more pestered with attention than I am. What with beef-tea and comforters, my life's a burden to me. But to be tucked up!—there he goes again, laying down the law, and father is listening."

"Well," said Mrs. Henfrey, "what did he do next?"

"Do! Why he sat down on the side of the bed and lectured me; said it was unmanly to neglect my health, and showed a cowardly wish to escape the duty of being prudent; said it was selfish, talked about father, you know, and my duty to myself on his account; and how, if anything happened to me, it would break his heart. Well, that's an affecting point of view to set it in, but he shouldn't have tucked me up! However, in another minute it was all over with me. Giles went on talking of father: 'How could I go on in this way, when I knew I was as dear to him as the apple of his eye?' I could not stand that; I said, 'Which eye?' Now that seems a natural enough question to ask; but I suppose my long silence made it impressive, for old Giles forgot all his heroics, and laughed till he shook the bed. Father has a habit, sometimes, of looking at one, rubbing his hands, and whispering to himself, 'He's as dear to me, this fellow is, as the very apple of my eye.' Sometimes he does it to St. George, and sometimes to me. 'I suppose as one was appropriated to you before I was born, and he has but two, mine must be the left,' I went on; 'and to be as the apple of one's father's left eye, is no such great matter, when he can't see out of it. O the meanness of keeping the good eye for yourself!' Well, I paid dear for that sally; he laughed, but I began to

cough, and I coughed (to use an appropriate simile) till the gunpowder ran out at the heels of my boots."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Henfrey, anxiously. She was very much disturbed to hear this, and not at all amused at his queer way of relating it. "Then what is St. George going to do?"

"That is exactly what I want to know. I hope he is not ruining all my prospects in life; but if he is, I cannot help it. I've done my best."

He now plunged into his exercise, and only paused once during the next half-hour to say, "I am taken in tow by the powerful steam-tug 'Dorothea,' registered A 1, for fifteen years. I'm coming into port at a spanking rate, and I know they'll say, 'Let him keep on terms with the young woman; what signifies his terms with old Alma Mater?'"

Presently he broke out again—

"Here am I, six feet one in my socks (St. George is only a bare five feet eleven when he first wakes in the morning), and yet I'm reading Greek with a girl, and have never yet had so much as one sniff of the air of freedom. If I had been up at Cambridge all these weeks, and my cough had been left alone, perhaps it would have been well before now."

Aunt Christie now came in, and Mrs. Henfrey detailed to her how Valentine coughed at night. I never saw anyone so gently, peaceably, and persistently uninterested in the droll side of things as Mrs. Henfrey

was, and yet so kind and comfortable. Though she was a widow and had lost two young children, her face looked unworn and satisfied. In her life the affections must surely have played a subordinate part. She had let her good things go easily. She had what are called substantial comforts about her, and she pleased herself with them. Perhaps she had never held the others very closely to her heart; but a little shade of anxiety was visible now on her pleasing face. And when Aunt Christie made light of "the Oubit's" ailment, it did not reassure her.

Aunt Christie was not in the least like one's notion of a spinster in poor circumstances. There was an affluence of energy, and sometimes an agreeable vehemence in her ways, that spoke of strength, both of mind and body. Her hands and feet were large and bony; and, though more than sixty years old, she evidently found a deep joy in life, and thought of it as a great blessing.

She soon began to talk to me, and Valentine called her to order,—

"Miss Graham belongs to me. We haven't done our Greek yet."

Presently she spoke again, and again he found fault, and she ridiculed him.

"We've done our Greek now," I observed.

"But I have annexed you," he answered. "I'm a great comfort to you; I satisfy the craving you have to

be useful, you know; and I consider that, in return, you ought to devote yourself to me. In fact, it's no fun to talk to you, unless I can have you, as it were, for my own possession."

"Ay, ay, possession!" said Aunt Christie. "It's astonishing how early the mind of humanity begins to cling to the notion of possession. I remember I was but seven or eight years old" (here he interrupted her, but she went on just the same), "I was but seven or eight years old when my father gave me a bit of ground to make a garden of, and through it ran a little burn, that, before it reached us, came down past one or two of the cotters' doors. One day, some of their bairns made and launched on it a fleet of paper boats. They came floating down into my water, and I, full of a lofty indignation to think that they should intrude where I was mistress of the property, flung out every one of the flabby things with my rake; and while they lay wrecked on the grass, I proudly compared myself to Van Tromp, sailing through the narrow seas with a broom at his mast-head, to signify that he had swept the English ships from the Channel."

She had a way of telling this which showed she meant to compare his conduct with her own, and nothing that he said made any difference. He had been made ridiculous in my eyes and in his own.

Tom and Mr. Brandon were away some hours; but, while dressing me for dinner, Mrs. Brand told me they

had returned, and brought a gentleman with them, who would stay and dine—a Doctor Limpsey; and the cook had received orders to keep back the dinner half an hour. “She says she never lived with such a trying family,” continued Mrs. Brand. “She is sure the dinner will be spoilt; and she is so nervous, she is hardly fit to dish up.”

“Well, but if the dinner is spoilt, she need not worry; it will not be her fault.”

“Gentlefolks don’t consider that,” said Mrs. Brand; “they don’t know the difficulties there are below while they sit eating at their ease—nor the trouble of keeping jelly cold, and gravy hot, and the fish from burning, and the pudding from falling. Yet, if the dinner is not sent up as well as usual, you may depend on it, Mrs. Henfrey will speak about it to-morrow. Ladies always do.”

Dr. Limpsey was a pleasant man, and did his best to make the evening go off well. He and Tom had a long and animated conversation, and then we had some duets; but Mr. Mortimer sat perfectly silent in his chair, and Mr. Brandon watched him, and was very grave.

Late in the evening, as I sat a little apart from the rest, Valentine came up and said,—

“You see, St. George did steal a march on me. I believe he went away mainly to bring Dr. Limpsey; and when he had got him, he just said to my father

that it might be as well if he gave me a look. Father, of course, said 'Yes.' "

"But what did the Doctor say?"

"Why, he said I was to eat bread and milk for my breakfast. At my age, too!"

"You don't like it, then?"

"If that fellow Prentice were to hear that I eat bread and milk for my breakfast, I should never hear the last of it."

"But surely, that was not all he said?"

"No; he poked and tapped, and listened with his ear at my chest; said I was to have a fire in my room all day; and remarked to father, as if I had been a sweet, unconscious infant, that I was a very fine young fellow, and there was a thickening of the right lung. Then I was sent away, and not allowed to hear any more of their odious plans."

And he recurred to the prescription of his breakfast, and to Prentice, with such heartfelt annoyance, that I said,—

"I am very fond of bread and milk; I shall ask if I may have some too; and I shall ask Liz to join. No doubt she will; and then, if anything does reach the ears of Prentice, it will be that some of the family and the guests have taken a liking to it, and generally eat it."

"You are a brick!" he exclaimed, "if ever there was one."

And the next morning three basins "smoked upon the board."

Valentine did not appear to feel at all uneasy about the remarks of the doctor on his health. He grumbled a good deal when he went into the morning room, because it had been decreed that for the present he was only to go out in fine weather; but he laid out his books and lexicons and exercises, and called on me to come and give my lesson, as if he found having some one to tyrannise over a set-off against the despotic orders of the physician.

"And I wish you to understand, my dear young friend," he presently said, "that you are not going to have all the lecturing and instructing to yourself. I am going to take my turn now, and overhaul your education a little before I begin my Greek."

"No, don't!" I replied, for Tom and Mr. Brandon had come in, and Aunt Christie was listening.

"I shall begin with a few moral remarks," he proceeded. "I wish to see what use you have made of your many advantages; for, no doubt, my good girl, you are sensible that you have had advantages. That's the style, isn't it, Aunt Christie?"

Aunt Christie pricked up her head. "Ye're just the marvel of creation for idleness and impudence," she answered, with a good-natured laugh.

"Now, then," he continued, "you went on a yachting tour last winter; went to Buenos Ayres?"

"Yes?"

"What's the latitude and longitude of Buenos Ayres?"

"I forget—at least I don't know with perfect accuracy."

"Sad, sad, breaking down at once! Is that the best answer you can give me?"

"Why," exclaimed St. George, "you don't mean to say that you know yourself?"

"I do."

"You have been consulting books of travels then, and that accounts for some gaps on my shelves."

"I shall take no notice of your mean insinuation. Describe Buenos Ayres, Miss Graham."

"It's a horrid, watery, sandy, square, uninteresting place."

"If I were to go to that country, I have no doubt I could find interesting things in it for years," said Valentine, reproachfully.

"No doubt at all, Oubit," said Aunt Christie.

"The shallowest sea God ever spread is deep enough to float a flounder."

"There's nothing I could not make something of, or get something out of," continued the young professor.

"Quite true," said St. George. "I believe if you met a sea-nymph walking by the shore, you would beg a bit of coral of her."

"And why shouldn't I?" exclaimed Valentine.

"Why shouldn't you put the highest things to their lowest use? Well, that's a subject for your own consideration quite as much as for mine."

"So the town's square, is it?" said Valentine. "Yes, I know it is."

"But I only went once into the town," I continued.

"Then make some rather more intelligent remarks concerning it."

"I saw in the streets paving-stones with English inscriptions on them, such as 'Try Warren's Blacking,' and 'Do you bruise your Oats yet?' I asked what this meant, and was told that they had no stone, so they imported old pavement from England. It comes as ballast. I think they said they had a contract with the Kensington Vestry or the Nottinghill Vestry. I know it was somewhere at the West-End. Do you find that confirmed in your books?"

"Let me have none of this levity. How wide is the river?"

"Thirty or forty miles, I should think; and when I saw the harbour, it was generally full of carts and horses."

"In the water?"

"Of course. The ships lie nearly two miles from the shore. The water used to wash over the horses' backs as they came out to them."

"Do you think the horses liked it?"

"No; they used to kick and plunge a good deal, so that great pumpkins and melons, and all sorts of lumpish nuts, and queer fruits and berries, used to be set afloat out of the carts, and come sailing down to us. A man stood bolt upright on each horse's back, and appeared to stand on the water, for you only saw the horse's head, you know."

"That must have had rather a bathing-machine effect. Well, I can make nothing of you. What else did you see in those parts?"

"I saw Rio."

"What have you to remark concerning it?"

"It was perfectly beautiful! and I went in an omnibus to see the Horticultural Gardens."

"An omnibus!"

"Yes; and there is a rock in them nearly three thousand feet high, and it was so hot that I could hardly bear to lay my hand on it."

"That's what we call accurate information. The Corcovada Rock you mean—2,400 feet high."

"Ah! that is mentioned in your book, then. Does it add that the butterflies there, instead of wavering and wagging about, go shooting and darting across like birds? I saw some great flowers like open loose lilies, and settling on them were crowds of large butterflies, with perfectly transparent wings. The sun shone through them, and all their delicate little veins

were reflected on the lilies. It was intensely hot, but that could not have been the reason why the birds were so lazy: they expected us to get out of their way. When I came among a crowd of large ones, I felt inclined to say, 'Do get out of my path, will you?' Buenos Ayres smelt of wool: all that part of South America had a woolly smell that you could perceive out at sea. But Rio had a slightly mouldy scent, as of damp woods and fruits wasted and decaying in the hot, steaming shade."

"Fancy, mere fancy, Miss Graham. How am I to classify such talk as this?"

"I have often noticed," said Mr. Brandon, "that everything coming from the prairie towns in the States has a perceptible smell of grass."

"And you can smell London ten miles off by the smoke," observed Mrs. Henfrey.

"And all India smells of sandal-wood," remarked Tom.

"Very improving, this. Proceed."

"The cooks go to market on horseback. The beggars beg on horseback (at least, the cripples do), and the children ride down the hills to school on the backs of large sheep."

"Now, I wonder whether that's true, or not! Have you any other remark to make?"

"Yes. I did not hear any birds sing at Rio, but the frogs chirped exactly as sparrows do, and there

were flies who whistled at night. Their note was just like a railway whistle, and quite as loud."

"Now, stop! I am going to sum up, and I will mainly insist on that perverse ingenuity which has not only avoided conveying one single item of worthy information, but which has prevented me from bringing out my learning. One more question. What is the depth of Rio harbour?"

"I don't know."

"Then, as Captain Cuttle said, 'No more don't I.'"

After this I had Valentine and his Greek to myself all the rest of the morning, and, after luncheon, April having treated us to one of her ever-fresh varieties, and given us a warm, still, and very sunny day, we sallied forth in a body to a certain fir copse, where we meant to sit for awhile, Aunt Christie bringing some books with her, and Tom also. We reached a screen of larches, and came through it to a place where the underwood had been cut away, and the large trees left. A good many felled trunks lay on the ground, with clumps of primroses about them, and on the slope of a ridge grew whole nations of anemones and wild hyacinths.

We sat down on the ridge, just in front of the screen of firs. The long, deep dell was all bare to the light, for the chestnuts and poplar-trees had not yet unfolded their crumpled leaves, and the sun was

pouring down his rays on the heads of the flowers. I do not know that a partly felled wood is a particularly lovely place in general, but that unsullied sky was delightful, so was the sudden warmth and the thick shelter behind us, and I liked to see the shy English birds flitting about and piping, and then peeping round corners at us.

Aunt Christie was with us, but not Mrs. Henfrey, she almost always remained where Mr. Mortimer chose to be. Valentine presently came up, with a large untidy bunch of flowers in each hand, and his little dog followed with some twigs of flowering larch in his mouth.

Aunt Christie began to caress him. It appeared that he was Emily's dog, and had been left in special charge of Valentine.

"Bonny Emily!" said Aunt Christie, "I miss her. It's not much of a man she's got; but, I'll answer for it, she rules him well."

"She does," said Mr. Brandon. "Not that that is anything uncommon; this is a woman-ridden age. Yet, it is but fair to confess that all the former ones were man-ridden ages. What we want is a happy proportion."

"Emily was always sure such wonderful things were coming," remarked Lou. "Wasn't she, St. George?"

"Yes," he answered, "Emily always wanted *all*—

wanted the sea at her doorsteps, to come singing up the street, between her and the opposite neighbours. Have we no boats? How easy to step on board; and then we should be out on the road that leads *everywhere*."

Valentine, who had flung himself full length on the slope, and tied his flowers together, taking the twigs from his dog to add to them, now reared himself on one elbow, and graciously saying, "There, I knew you wanted some of these," dropped the ponderous lump of flowers on my lap.

"My dear boy!" said Mr. Brandon, "I really think I must take you in hand; is that the sort of nosegay to give a lady—bigger than her head, and tied up with an old hat-band, torn off for the occasion?"

"Well," answered Valentine, sulkily, "I had nothing else to tie it up with; and as for bigness, I got one twice as big, last week, for Jane Wilson."

"Worse and worse! you shouldn't have mentioned that little fact at all. Now when I give a nosegay to a lady—"

"Ah! but you never do."

"How do you know that?"

"Ay," said the old aunt, "how does he know that?" It was an *ay* at least two syllables long.

Mr. Brandon made some reply, in which he was especially severe on the dripping cur, out of whose mouth some of the stuff had been taken, and who, he

said, had been pushing his nose into every rat-hole within reach; and Valentine, taking the matter quite in earnest, exclaimed, "Now, Liz! now, Aunt Christie! isn't this a shame?—Giles was never known in all his days to be attentive and polite. It's my belief he can't bear girls; and because I try to supply his deficiencies, he calls my dog a cur."

"Oh, pray defend your dog," I said; "you seem to feel the remarks on him far more than those on yourself."

"So I do; he smells no worse than other fellows' dogs, when they have been rat-hunting; and, as to carrying things for me, that's his nature—he's only acting according to his lights." Then, observing that we were laughing at him for taking the thing so seriously, he suddenly came out of his sulky fit, and exclaimed, "If I could see your nosegays, Giles, no doubt I should have a fine example to copy; but it's my belief they are not yet gathered."

"Nor likely to be," said Lou.

"Fancy Giles presenting a nosegay!" exclaimed Liz.

"On one knee, with the words, 'Accept this wreath, O loveliest of thy sex!'" said Mr. Brandon; "that is my favourite style."

Presently after this Tom was desired by the old aunt to read, and he took up a volume of Carlyle that he had with him, and some of us listened, and the others took an interest in the bringing down of a ragged

last year's nest, which hung in a young tree, close in front of us.

Valentine first flung his own bandless hat at it; but instead of coming down with the nest, it stuck up there, in the fork itself. Many fir-cones lay strewed about; these he collected into a heap, and the two brothers, as they sat, pelted the hat with great skill and interest, till Liz, suddenly observing that Valentine had nothing on his head, leaned forward, and, whispering for a moment to Mr. Brandon, lifted off his hat and quietly put it on Valentine. Neither of the two took any particular notice; and there was something so easy and familiar in the little action, that I wondered afresh whether it was all my own fault that my brother held me, as it seemed, so far off.

But the fir-cones being now exhausted, with no effect, St. George took up the big bunch of flowers, which lay beside me, and flung it up with such force into the tree, that it brought the hat crashing down at last, and the nest and a dead bough with it. On hearing the noise and seeing this pother, Tom naturally looked up, and paused, whereupon Miss Christie, no doubt thinking it would not be courteous to let him suppose we took no interest in his reading, proceeded to make some observations on it, and Tom, shutting the book, said, "Carlyle is a rare old boy; he digs up a thought, now and then, which is like a nugget of pure gold."

"Ah, but we should value it more if he sometimes left it uncoined," observed Mr. Brandon; "he always stamps it with his own image and superscription."

"Now, what do you mean by that, for goodness' sake?" said Aunt Christie, a little tartly.

"That it is egotistical to write in such a style that nobody can mistake a sentence for any other man's concoctions."

"Ah, well, Giles, we all know that the poor old man is no favourite of yours; but," she added, as if conscious that she had only said this because she was secretly vexed at any sort of disparagement of any old person whatever,—“but I think this old woman is and always has been.”

"*Poor old man*," repeated Tom, very much amused at such an expression applied to Carlyle; "Now, suppose we try a change."

"Yes, but not Tennyson—not the Mendelssohn of poets," exclaimed Mr. Brandon, as if in great alarm.

"Why not?" replied Tom.

"Because I'm so choked up with sentiment already to-day, that I hardly know what to do with myself, and I know he'll make me worse."

"I like sentiment," said Lou, idly; "it's so soothing."

"Soothing? soothing, indeed! Well, if I am to plunge into sentiment, let it be over head and ears,

and in good earnest, and let there be nobody there to see. But a large party dallying with it, and dipping in here a foot, and there a finger, is what I cannot understand."

"Because you are so vehement," said Tom. "Now, when I read this sort of thing, I feel like a cat sitting still to be stroked by its master's hand. I like it, and purr accordingly."

"When my masters lay their hands upon me, I never feel that I am being stroked; I feel the thrill of their touch vibrating among the strings of my heart, and playing wild music on that strange instrument to a tune that I never intended; making it tremble and shake to its inmost core, in their unsparing race over the chords."

"Do you mean to say that any living poet has such an effect on you now?"

"No; but a man who once had real power, must retain a portion of it thus, that the old strain recalls the time when it was felt to be so suitable and so telling; and nothing is more affecting than to be thrown back into one's former self unawares."

"I'm sure it's past my power to see any resemblance between Tennyson and Mendelssohn," said Aunt Christie.

"There is a kind of subtle beauty in their harmonies. Something dreamy, and a general pensiveness of effect which comes partly from high finish. They

are both tender and not passionate, and they both appeal strongly to the feminine side of a man's nature. Handel, on the contrary, is almost exclusively masculine, just as Milton is."

"Handel is a very jolly fellow," said Tom.

"He is a glorious fellow; I like him better than Milton, and Tennyson better than Mendelssohn. Handel's humanity is grave and deep; his pathos manly, his reverence sublime. When I hear his music I feel the more a man for it. He makes one brave. His sweetness does not subdue, but comfort and elevate; his passion keeps clear of all puling. I go and hear him whenever I can."

"Giles is like a jockey," observed Valentine, "he goes into training to make himself strong."

"And he's as full of sentiment as he can hold," said the old aunt, nodding at him. "I always used to be afraid he would turn out a poet himself. Why didn't ye, Giles?"

"It was entirely on account of the rhymes," he answered, bantering her. "There are so many bad rhymes in the English language, and they would come to me."

"And that's a pity," she answered with gravity; "a bad rhyme, like a bad egg, is aye conspeecuous. You may beat up a dozen eggs in the cake, but if only one of them's bad it spoils all. Now what are you two girls laughing at?"

"Perhaps at your notion about Giles turning out a poet," said Valentine.

"And Miss Graham, too," she continued. "Well, child, ye might know better, for ye've seen the world; but, as I remember, ye found some of the strangest parts of it very uninteresting."

"Yes," said Giles, "I was surprised when you said that, Miss Graham. I should have thought you would find plenty there to gratify the widest and most wholesome curiosity."

"Ay, and intelligence, too," proceeded Aunt Christie. "And I am glad, to be sure, she has some of that; for, my dears, all of you, ye may have remarked that one must have a certain amount both of intelligence and knowledge to be amazed even at the most extraordinary things."

We admitted the truth of this, and she went on. "I remember when I was a mere wean I had a nurse-girl that thought to make me respect and fear her by telling me that her grandmother was a very powerful witch; and, indeed, if she pleased to mutter her spells she could make the moon come down into our back yard; but I was not at all impressed, for I argued with myself that the moon, as I had seen, came down somewhere every night, with no spells at all. At one time I had seen it go down into the trees behind the manse, at another it would dip the other side that hill where Johnnie MacQueen had his potato garden. So I just

answered, 'When your granny brings her down so near as that, ye won't forget to wake me, for I would dearly like to have a look at her.' "

This story was mainly directed at me, and was supposed to illustrate my want of intelligence; but there was more good-nature than malice in it, and Aunt Christie evidently felt that now she had the laugh on her side.

"And all this time," she continued, "we're keeping the *lieftenant* from his books."

"Because Brandon's so afraid of Tennyson," said Tom. And I broke in, "I should be very sorry to do without him."

"Ten years ago I imbued myself with him thoroughly," observed Mr. Brandon. "Like a cow that has fed on madder I was dyed in his colour to the very bones; that was when I was young and careless, as you all are now, including Aunt Christie.—Lou!"

"Yes, dear," answered Lou.

"I hear the sound of wheels—the wheels as of a very exceeding old and rickety yellow chariot. It will be our painful duty to go in."

"Who sits in the yellow chariot?" asked Tom.

"A fine woman. Unless her soul is twice the customary size, it can be no match for its tabernacle."

"I'll go in and pay my respects to the fine woman."

"Sister knows where we are," observed Liz; "if she wants us she can send for us."

"Mrs. Wilson and Jane with her!" exclaimed Valentine. "They are come to call on Aunt Christie."

A carriage was now seen for a moment, and a smiling face nodding and bowing. "Well, we must go in," said the girls, and we all rose.

"But there is no need for Miss Graham to come in," observed Mr. Brandon. "I dare say she would much prefer to be left here for half-an-hour."

I replied that I should like it exceedingly, and they went away, Mr. Brandon saying that he would come when the Wilsons were gone and fetch me in.

When they were gone I leaned my chin upon my hand, had a long and delightful dream all to myself, and sat so still that the birds and squirrels grew bold, and the butterflies, taking me perhaps for a mere erection made of drapery, settled nearer, and then the robins began to sing with shriller notes and hop about with a perter air.

In what seemed a very little while, I heard the tread of a man's foot on the dead twigs; Mr. Brandon approached, and, strange to say, he had some wild flowers in his hand—a nosegay fresh and perfect, made of the most delicate flowers and the youngest leaves and newly-opened violets. He looked very grave, as he generally did when not talking. "I hope you have not found the time long," he said; "we have been

away three-quarters of an hour." Then he sat down a little below me on the slope, took out a manuscript, and tearing off its last leaf, on which nothing was written, folded it round his nosegay, and said gravely, "I robbed you of your flowers; may these take their place?" How little sisters know their brothers! was the thought that darted into my mind, but I tried to be as grave as he was while I held out my hand for them, and said, "Is that MS. the lecture? If so I did not hear the end of it."

"Nor any one else as here written," he replied. "I only write my lectures down, because, being a coward by nature, I seldom like to stand up without something to fall back upon in case I should lose my self-possession."

"What would be likely to take it away?" I enquired.

He looked surprised at my question, and no wonder, for it asked him to unfold a little point in his character, which at first I thought he meant to keep to himself, but he did not. He replied, "If I were to look up suddenly and see some one whose presence I had been unaware of, and whom I very much wished to please, I might lose it; and yet if I had known beforehand of that very person's intended presence, and been ready for it, I should find it a great stimulus; and I think most people would give the same account of themselves."

"I suppose," he presently added, "you know who it was that saved my lecture last night? You recognized the voice that made game of my assailants?"

"No, indeed,"

"It was Graham. That fellow is so quick—he seized the opportunity instantly."

"How clever of him!"

"Yes." Then he hesitated and presently said, "I wonder whether you have any influence over him."

"No, not the least in the world."

"You are sure of that; you feel that you have no power to persuade him?"

"No, indeed, I have none."

"That is odd," he went on, "for you began to influence my young brother directly."

"They are not alike—they are fitful, and they want perseverance, but it is from different causes."

"Yes, that is true," he said, and seemed to ponder.

"And Tom is so much above me, he is intellectually so much my superior, that," I went on, "I am afraid of him."

Upon this he looked up, smiled, and said, "Afraid of him! Very few people inspire you with such a feeling, I should think."

"On the contrary, when I do not understand people, I often feel afraid of them."

"Are you afraid of Valentine?"

"Certainly not."

“‘*Certainly not!*’” with a little exultant laugh. “No, you can wind that young gentleman round your finger. Are you afraid of me?”

“Will you read the end of that lecture? I should like so much to hear it.”

Without answering he continued to look at the flowers as I held them with one hand on my knee, and smoothed a leaf and settled a bud with the other. “Ah!” he said, “you treat my flowers just as you did Valentine’s. A long time ago—ten years—as I sat in this wood, and almost in this very spot, I gave a bunch of flowers to—” and here he paused for some time, then went on without putting in any name: “She held them as she talked, and flattered them with the touch of her delicate fingers; she smoothed the primrose faces, and spread out the crumpled leaves with her caressing hand, but she cared to have them no more than you did for that prodigious bunch; and she showed it, just as you have done. I felt it (young fool that I was)—I felt it to the very heart.”

“I did not mean to disparage Valentine’s flowers. I touched them very lightly; it could not make them fade.”

“Very lightly, just as you have been touching mine now, as softly as one might smooth a baby’s hair. I never saw flowers so treated from that day to this. It was not what she did that pained me, but what she did not do.”

“And have I followed her in that omission?”

His words troubled me exceedingly; they were the regretful avowal of some passionate love; but as he looked up at me he made me so thoroughly conscious again of the imaginary beauty with which he invested me, that I was abashed and felt my face colour over with a bloom that nature did not bestow on me often. They were such inconvenient blushes that I was fain to lift up the flowers to hide them, and I inhaled their fragrance and lingered over it as long as I could. I thought of Dorinda, and wondered how there could be anything to be so disturbed about, concerning some earlier love, if he was satisfied of hers; and when I was obliged to put the flowers down, I said: “Perhaps this friend of yours was just as unconscious of disparaging the flowers as I have been twice this afternoon; but I should like to be warned for the future. What did she do?”

“What did she omit? It was what you have just this moment done. She did not lift them to her face, nor let them touch her lips, and exhale their fragrance for her. I might have gathered dog-violets for any sweetness she drew from them.”

“I know you abjure sentiment.”

“Yes, I do.”

“Then let us look for a prosaic reason for her behaviour. Perhaps that lady did not like the scent of flowers.”

"Perhaps that lady did not like *me*."

"It would be as absurd seriously to conclude so——"

He had turned on his elbow, and laughter lighted up his eyes when I paused—"As to infer the contrary now," he said; "yes, so it would, and yet if flowers are gathered for your especial pleasure and you accept them, I think it is singular not to ascertain whether they are sweet or not."

"As I have done, but then I am not afraid of Tennyson, or of Mendelssohn either."

"Do you ever think of the oracular Miss Tott? It would have shocked her sentimental soul to hear you make that last speech; she would have moaned over your audacity, and answered you as she did Graham—'Ah, you will be some day.'"

"But shall I? Do you think I shall?"

"My thought should be at your service if it was worth having, but I do not know enough of you to make it so. Do you remember Walter Scott's description of Minna and Brenda, and the feelings of those damsels as regarded ghosts? 'The one,' he says, 'believed, but was not afraid; the other did not believe, but trembled'—with which of the two do you sympathize?"

"I admire the first, though I fear I might not be able to imitate her. The second I pity, but I blame and I think I almost despise her. At present, my belief

is that there are no ghosts, and certainly I do not tremble."

"When they rise, then, and begin to haunt you, you will, I doubt not, be what you admire—*not afraid*, at least not long afraid; you will know that they exist, but you will learn first to master them, and then to lay them."

"When they rise? Oh, how can you say such eerie things, Mr. Brandon? they make me wish to go in directly."

He laughed, but answered—"They have made you rise, but it is just as well to go in; the air begins to freshen, and the sun has lost its power. I am almost as doleful as Miss Tott, am I not?"

"On the contrary, all these ghosts and spirits of yours are evidently unable to daunt you; perhaps they spur you on to be more courageous."

"Perhaps—or my companion may be powerful to lay them. There used to be a spirit of the past, that has often appeared to me in this wood; you must have chased it away."

I felt there was something ambiguous in these words, but I answered literally—"Oh, no, I do not even believe in ghosts; how then can I have any dealings with them?"

CHAPTER VIII.

Celia. Young gentleman, your spirits are too bold for your years.—
As You Like It.

As we entered the hall Valentine met us, and said,—

“Oh, Giles, what a pity you were out! Miss Dorinda has been here. They came home, it seems, this morning. In case you should be away, she left this, and said she could not wait, but should be at home on Monday morning.”

He gave a letter to Giles, who forthwith walked with it to the window, and broke the seal. As I went upstairs to change my walking dress, I felt my spirits suddenly lowered, and wished there was no such person in the world as this Miss Dorinda; but, then, I had been fairly told about her, and that she had a “heavenly countenance.” What, then, was the matter with me? Mr. Brandon, according to my then opinion, was of an age that made it natural I should like to have him for a friend, though he was Miss Dorinda’s lover. Such a new tone had stolen into his voice, and such a new look into his eyes, that I regarded his interest in me as quite certain. I greatly wished to have two or three friends of the other sex; but all of a sudden it occurred to me that, perhaps, Miss Dorinda might not like it at all.

I thought of the flowers, too; and felt a sudden compunction. I was ashamed for myself, and also for him. His family had all agreed to laugh at the notion of his being attentive to ladies. He had not contradicted them; and yet, as soon as we were alone, he had thought proper to bring those flowers to me. "Ah!" I thought, "if I were engaged, and my lover had brought flowers to some other girl, and had talked to her and listened to her so, it would have cut me to the heart if I had seen it. But I suppose this is flirting; and it seems that all men do it, even the gravest of them, when their sisters are not there to see." Then I reflected on the open manner in which his admiration for Miss Braithwaite was talked of by himself and others, and I supposed he considered this very openness gave him a right to be as attentive to other girls as he pleased.

I cannot say that when we met again in the drawing-room he seemed at all penitent; and two or three times that evening, though his sisters were present, he spoke to me with very much of the same interest that he had displayed in the wood.

But he also talked of Miss Braithwaite—expressed his pleasure at her return, and said he never felt like himself when she was away. So it could not be an engagement made merely for convenience, I thought; but she must have entered into it with a very willing mind, if no attention was paid beforehand.

"I shall go over on Monday morning, of course," he observed.

"How did she look?" asked Mrs. Henfrey.

"Why, sister," replied Valentine, in a regretful tone, "she looked more fragile than ever;—as if a mere breath of wind would blow her away."

Upon this, to my surprise, the sister laughed; and Valentine went on,—

"But, perhaps, she thinks it would be more to the purpose if the wind would blow somebody else away. No doubt she has been singing that song that Liz is so fond of—

" 'Wind of the western sea, blow him again,
Blow him again, blow him again to me.' "

"Is nothing to be sacred from your foolish jokes?" exclaimed Mr. Brandon, darting an angry look at Valentine, who was so startled at the suddenness of the rebuke and its vehemence, that he stopped singing, with his mouth open.

It had been impossible not to laugh at his cracked voice; but when we perceived that the matter was serious, we became grave as quickly as we could. Liz and Louisa forthwith began to play a duet, which had been open before them for some time, while they waited till it was the pleasure of the family to hear it.

Valentine went away to the window at the end of the long drawing-room, and sulked there a while. I could not help watching him—so much of him, at

least, as I could see, for it was a bow-window; but the curtains were hung straight across, so as to inclose a little *den* behind them. As he was evidently very sulky indeed, and no overtures of peace were made, I shortly followed him there; but not out of pure pity—it was quite as much because I did not wish to be asked to sing. He had ensconced himself in the deep window-seat, and was staring out into the starry sky, when I looked in between the heavy grey curtains, which hung about a foot apart.

“Well,” he said, like a great, blunt boy, “what do you want?”

“What are you doing here?”

“Doing? Why, nothing! But this is as nice a place as any other.”

“Oh, very nice; and so cheerful.”

“I am not cheerful, then. What business has St. George to stamp upon me as he does?”

Then, after a pause,—

“Hang Dorinda!”

“You need not try to make me believe that you are out of temper,” I replied; “you are tired of that. You have not dignity enough to act the martyr for long together.”

He screwed his face into all manner of twists to hide a smile, but the smile would come, and then came a laugh; and he exclaimed,—

"I say, I wish you would come in here and sit with me."

So I came in, and we sat together in the window-seat,—sometimes looking out on the dark, driving clouds; and sometimes into the lighted drawing-room; for the long curtains, sweeping apart on each side, enabled us to see what was passing there. We were deep in sea talk when Liz looked in. She wanted Valentine, and so did St. George. He was to play the flute part of some new duets. Valentine sent word back to his brother that I would not let him go: I could not spare him. Whereupon, Mr. Brandon presently put his head into our retreat.

"Now, Giles," said Valentine, "I'm improving my mind; Miss Graham is telling me a story. And if you want to come in, come in! and don't stand blocking out the light. Well, go on, Miss Graham. 'She was sailing right in the wind's eye,' didn't you say? 'when he, most unexpectedly, closed it; and they wouldn't have been able to trim the sails if one of them hadn't been torn to ribbons, which they naturally used for the purpose.'"

"Nonsense!"

"Ah! it's very well to say nonsense; but I've heard Giles say that if it was possible to use a sea-term erroneously, you had the wit to do it. Your brother says the same. No, it wasn't exactly that, St. George, that we were talking of. She was telling me, that *in a ship*

the yards in sailing before the wind are braced square, and the mizen sail alone is usually in a fore-and-aft position. Isn't that a nice thing to know? I'm glad they brace the yards square, it does equal honour to their heads and hearts."

"Touching confidences," said Mr. Brandon; "but, Miss Graham, come and sing to us."

"Oh, you have heard my songs; besides, you said last night that I sang without the least feeling."

"I did not say so to you."

"O duty!" exclaimed Valentine, "how often dost thou interfere with our pleasure!"

"What else did the Oubit tell you, Miss Graham?"

"That you said I sang in excellent time and tune, but without feeling, which you wondered at, for I had a flexible voice; and that I accompanied myself beautifully."

"And what do you think she answered?" said Valentine; "the self-conceit of girls is amazing. She said, 'How do you know that I could not sing with feeling if I chose?' Then if she could, why doesn't she?"

"Oh, there are many reasons why people sing without feeling," he answered; "some have no feeling to express."

"Exactly so," said Valentine.

"Some have harsh, or cold, or shrill voices, so that they strive after expression in vain."

"Not my own case, happily," said Valentine, "but a common one."

"Some people want the poetic faculty; they have not discovered how to match a sensation with a sound, and translate their souls into other people's ears with an A flat and a B natural,—as the hooting owl does her yearning after young mice for supper."

"That is common enough, but not *our* case," said Valentine.

"And some are nervous, and think of nothing but getting the song over."

"That cap does not fit either," replied Valentine.

"And some people are sensitive and reserved. They are not only half afraid of their own deeper feelings, but they are anxious not to betray the existence of any such."

"And why should they?" I asked; "why should they betray their feelings in a mixed company of people, who do not much care for them?"

"Why should they, indeed! But why should you turn advocate so suddenly?" He laughed as if very much amused, and I could only reply, "that I did not like any display of feeling."

"People who have deep feelings," he answered, "never display, and only reveal them to a few; but to a person who has observation they often betray them."

I wondered how much I had betrayed of my anxieties and disappointment about Tom, when he ques-

tioned me in the wood as to any influence I had over him.

"Are you a person with much observation?" I inquired.

"It would appear that I think so," he said.

"But if you were, and I knew it," was my reply, "I should be impelled to go on singing just the same."

"You would not," he said, "if you thought every one was observant. It is of no use trying to hide things in a cabinet with glass doors."

"No, I think in such a case I could not make up my mind to sing at all."

"Oh yes, I think you could, considering that to understand is almost always to sympathise."

Almost directly upon this remark, Liz and Lou fetched me from my retreat and made me sing, but as may easily be imagined, I sang none the better for this conversation, but rather the worse, adding nervousness to my other faults, and losing my place more than once. There is pleasure, no doubt, in conversing with a person who can make one feel, or fancy, that he has studied one's character with interest, and can sympathise with its peculiarities; but in this case it had taken away my self-possession, and made me feel that I could do nothing naturally; and as I sat on the music-stool afterwards, so glad that my song was over, Valentine openly blamed his brother for not having let my singing alone.

The next day was a Sunday, a country Sunday,

most cheerful, quiet, and comforting; we walked to church through the green fields and between budding hedge-rows. There was a delightful scent of violets, and the rustic congregation had so many wall-flowers in their button-holes, that the whole place was sweet with them. On one side of the chancel sat Lou, with a number of chubby little urchins under her care; on the other was the lovely Charlotte Tikey, looking almost too pretty for any common work, but frowning at, and hustling, and marshalling the little girls.

Valentine had said, "When Prentice comes in I shall 'hem!' that you may look at him."

A heavy determined-looking youngster here advanced. The warning 'hem!' was given (we were very early, be it known). Prentice took his seat in the Vicar's pew. He had stiff hair, deep-set eyes, a square forehead, a short nose; his dress was unexceptionable, his gloves as tight as drum-parchment, his prayer-book gorgeous, his air supercilious.

I found it impossible not to have Prentice in my thoughts; he reminded me of some description I had seen in one of Dickens's works, of a youth about his age. When we sang, he seemed to express by his manner that we had done it very well, considering. When the Vicar preached, Prentice was attentive; he approved now and then, as might be seen by his conveying into his countenance a look which plainly said, "That is not bad—not at all bad. I quite agree with

you." He was also so good as to keep the younger pupils in order, and occasionally he favoured me with a look of curiosity, and, I thought, of disfavour. I felt all the time as if Dickens must have seen and sketched him.

As we came out of church, Prentice and Valentine met, and stayed behind to talk, Valentine running after and joining us, so very much out of breath that Mrs. Henfrey rebuked him for his imprudence.

"When you know," she remarked, "that Dr. Limpsey particularly said you were not to exert yourself."

"Why, sister," said Valentine, "would you have me let Prentice think that I'm broken-winded? I say," addressing me, "just take my arm for a minute, will you? Do."

He said this half confidentially, and I did take his arm; but he was so tall that I shortly withdrew, saying that I preferred to walk alone.

"Oh," he answered, "I don't care about it now. That fellow Prentice is out of sight. What do you think he stopped me to talk about?"

"I don't know."

"Why, about you. Asked who you were—and whether you were engaged?"

"Impertinent boy, what business is it of his?"

"Asked me if I thought of making myself agreeable! I replied that I had done that already; and he

was as savage as possible, though he pretended to be only amused."

"*You* were impertinent if you said that."

"Oh, don't be vexed; I only said it for fun. Come, I know you are not really angry." And, with another laugh and chuckle, he went on: "He said he supposed we were not engaged."

"Engaged!" I exclaimed. "Engaged! As if I should think of such a thing!"

"Well, don't be so hot about it. I said 'No!' Distinctly I said 'No!'"

"To a boy like you, why the very idea is preposterous."

So this was my first service in an English church, after months of sea-prayers, or strange looking on at foreign Roman Catholic worship. How much I had wished for such a Sunday—how fervent I had expected my prayers to be! but now I felt that some of my thoughts had been taken up by a conceited school-boy, and others had strayed to the wood, and been occupied with Mr. Brandon's speeches, and also with his remarks about Tom.

In the afternoon things were very little better. Mr. Brandon read the lessons for the Vicar. This seemed to be his custom, for it excited no attention; but it was a pleasure and a surprise to me. Then Prentice forced himself on my mind by his obvious watchfulness of Valentine and me, and the determined manner in

which he kept his face turned in our direction. I could not help thinking, too, that Valentine was needlessly careful to find the lessons and hymns for me, but I had no means of preventing this, nor of keeping his eyes on his book instead of on my face, where they were not wanted, and only fixed to make Prentice burst with suspicion and jealousy.

We sat all together in the evening, and there was sacred music and some reading aloud; but I found opportunity, at last, to give Valentine a lecture. I said I would not be made ridiculous; that Prentice was a most absurd boy, and I wondered Valentine could wish to make him believe there was a single other youth in the world as ridiculous as himself.

But the next morning, while Valentine and I were doing our Greek, the two ladies working, and the two girls reading novels, Mr. Brandon came in. He had written all Mr. Mortimer's letters, he said,—had nothing more to do for him all day: he and Tom were going to walk over to Wigfield, and would we go with them?

Liz and Lou were disconcerted. The box was going back to Mudie's, they said, and they had not finished the books. Tom came in, and uttered some denunciations against novel-writers, but the girls kept their seats, and looked goodnaturedly determined not to yield. "Dorothea would not come if they did—she had her Greek to do," said Lou. Liz said it was

windy, and then that it was cold, and then that it was a long walk to Wigfield; finally, they both proposed that we should go some other day.

"Very well; then suppose we give it up, Graham?"

"With all my heart," said Tom, idly.

"We'll go with you in the afternoon," Liz promised.

"I don't see how you can, as the Marchioness is coming to call, and we know it," said Mrs. Henfrey.

"Ah, yes," said Valentine to me, "she is coming to call, so you had better put your *war paint* on, and that best satin petticoat of yours *that I like*. She is made much of in these parts, I can tell you, for she is the only great lady we have."

"She is not coming to call on *me*," I answered; "so what does it signify?"

"Oh, yes she is," said Mr. Brandon; "I met her on Saturday, and she said so. It seems that, three years ago, your uncle was up the Nile."

"Yes," answered Tom, "so far the narrative is historical. Anything she may have added to that is probably not so."

"Very probably, indeed," said St. George. "I have not formed any notion as to what really occurred, though I have heard the story before. Perhaps their old yacht, knowing she could not possibly hang together another day, sagaciously ran herself on to a spit of sand of her own accord; and whether there

was a leak so large in her keel, that three crocodiles, who had been crying all the morning, walked in, and, sniffing loudly, began to search for pocket-handkerchiefs, or whether any of the more ordinary events of yacht-life took place, I cannot undertake to say; but I know the Marquis was very glad when Mr. Rollin, who was coming down, took them on board the 'Curlew,' and brought them to Cairo."

"It's too bad to take ladies to sea," said Tom. "My sister was wretchedly ill before she became accustomed to it."

"Well, there's nothing I would like better than a voyage," said Aunt Christie; "but I think I would be a little frightened in a storm."

"You would get used to it in time," I answered; "but it always remains very impressive."

"I do not feel it more impressive than the utter stillness of a night here," Tom answered.

"But it is a curious sensation, surely," said Mr. Brandon, "to wake and find yourself standing on your head in your berth, and your heart beating wrong end upwards!"

"Ay!" said the old Aunt, "I wouldn't like that."

"And then you become aware," he continued, "that, if you could see it, the bowsprit must be sticking straight up into the sky; in fact, that the ship is 'sitting up on end,' as old women say, and, like a dog, is making a point at some star. But while you're

thinking about that, suddenly she shakes herself, and rolls so that you wonder she doesn't roll quite over; and then she gives a spring and appears to shie, so that you feel as if you must call out 'Wo, there!' as to a horse; and then, without more ado, she begins to root with her bowsprit into the very body of the sea, as if she never could be easy again unless she could find the bottom of it."

"Well," said Aunt Christie, beguiled for the moment into a belief that this was a fair description of life at sea, "it's no wonder at all, then, that the poor Marchioness did not like it."

"No," said Valentine to me; "but, as I said before, you'd better put on some of your best things, for I shall naturally wish you to look well."

They all, Tom included, looked surprised at this speech. I knew Prentice was at the bottom of it.

"How engaging of you!" I answered, blandly. "You will have a clean pinafore on, yourself, no doubt; and I suppose you will expect me to give you a new rattle in return for your solicitude about me. I will, if I can get one for a penny, for I am rather tired of your present rattle."

This ought to have been a wittier retort, for nothing I ever said was so much laughed at. They were always delighted whenever I managed to snub Valentine, but on this occasion Aunt Christie spoilt all by shaking her finger at him, and saying, "Ay, laddie,

you've met with your match now; you've met with your match."

"That is exactly my own opinion," he replied, with emphasis; "if we didn't fight so over our Greek we might be taken for a pair of intellectual young turtle-doves."

"You'd better look out," exclaimed Lou suddenly, and Valentine instantly put his arm through mine.

"Bless you," he said, "we won't be parted; we'll go into exile together, like a pair of sleeve-links. Lay on, Macduff!"

I do not suppose any special personal punishment had been intended by his brother; besides the window was shut, and as he had linked his arm into mine, nothing could be done, and he triumphed.

"Well, I never expected to see ye let the Oubit get the better of ye so, St. George," exclaimed Aunt Christie; and again something was said about wasting the morning when it was so fine, and the walk to Wigfield was so beautiful.

"Then, why can't you go without us, dear?" said Lou, addressing her brother.

Mr. Brandon replied that it suited him to stay, and that he thought a little Greek would be good for his constitution. Accordingly he joined us; but though he could help Valentine far better than I could, he was not half so strict as I had been; and besides that, considering us both as his pupils, he bestowed as

much pains on my translation as on his, and sometimes laughed outright when I read, declaring that to hear a girl cooing out that manly tongue was as droll as it was delightful. After luncheon we had to wait a little while for the proposed call, and when it had been paid, Mrs. Henfrey said Lou must go with her in the carriage and pay a few visits. Aunt Christie and I both begged off, and as Liz found some fresh excuse for not going to Wigfield, we took a walk in the shrubbery instead, and in the wood; Mr. Brandon going with us and saying he should ride over to Wigfield at five o'clock, stay half-an-hour, and get back again in time for dinner. He and Tom were both in highly genial humour; Tom and Liz, without caring in the least for one another, were getting quite familiar and intimate; she informing him what a comfort he was to them. "When you are not here, St. George is always getting away, either to see Miss Braithwaite or that blessed Dick!"

"What's Dick?" said Tom, pretending to be jealous; "he can't argue with Dick. What does he find in Dick's society, I should like to know?"

We were crashing down the slope at a good pace, for as it did not suit us to walk in even paths, they were taking us into the wood. Tom had Liz on his arm, and Mr. Brandon had Aunt Christie and me.

"Is there anything else you would like to know?" said Aunt Christie, over her shoulder, to Tom.

"Yes, I should like to know why you all call him St. George."

"Why Dick's at the bottom of that too," said Liz.

"No!" exclaimed both she and Mr. Brandon together, as we sat down and Aunt Christie lifted up her hand—a usual habit of hers when she was going to speak: "We cannot possibly stand that story," Liz went on, "you would make it last half-an-hour."

Tom took out his watch. "How long would it take you to tell it?" he said, gravely, to Mr. Brandon.

"I think I could polish it off in about forty seconds," he answered.

"Let him try then—let him try," Aunt Christie said; "I'm sure my stories are very interesting, and some of them a great deal more to your credit than any of your present goings on."

"Now then," said Tom, with his watch still in his hand—"off!"

"I never promised to tell it at all."

"You've lost two seconds."

"Well, then, my dear young father's crest was a dragon, and I had a mug which had been his—a silver mug—with this crest on it, and out of it I used to drink the small beer of my childhood. Dick, then about eight years old, once, when his parents came to lunch, and brought him with them, was taken up-stairs to dine with us in our nursery, and as I tilted up my

mug to drink, he noticed that the dragon's tongue was out, and he managed to convey some notion to my mind that the circumstance was ignominious; he would have it that my dragon was putting out his tongue at *me*. So after wrangling all dinner-time about this, we fought under the table with fisticuffs as soon as we had finished—— How does the time get on?"

"Thirty seconds!"

"Dick was remarkably pugnacious, and when we met—which was rather often—we always fought, either about that, or something else, till my mother found it out, and told me various stories about St. George, and I began to make a kind of hero of him in my mind. She comforted me as regarded the dragon's tongue, by telling me what a wicked beast he was. He did that to defy St. George, she said——"

"Time's up!"

"All right, I've told you quite enough."

"I'll take ten more seconds and finish it," said Liz; "so mamma used to call him her little St. George. But Dick and Giles fought almost every holiday. It was not all malice, you know, but partly from native pugnacity, and partly to see which was strongest. Till the families quarrelled they were always at daggers drawn, and then, to show their perversity I suppose, Dick declared he didn't see what there was to contend about—took St. George's part most vehemently—said there was no fellow in the neighbourhood that was

such a dear friend of his, and they've been as intimate as possible ever since."

"A minute and five seconds in all," said Tom.

"And very badly told," said Aunt Christie; "as I tell it I can assure you it's a very pretty, I may say an affecting story, and how his mother talked to him, and what he said—he was a dear little fellow, that he was."

"But it's very awkward for a man of my modest nature to have your stories told to his face," said St. George, laughing; and she, with a real look of disappointment, said it was too cold to sit out of doors. I was full of ruth to think she was cut short in her tales, and as I took off my gloves to tie her veil, which was coming off, I said, "Never mind, Aunt Christie, tell some of your stories to me when none of them are by to interfere; you shall tell me this very story if you like, every bit of it, particularly what the mother said, for evidently those must have been prophetic words."

She gave me a pleased smile as she rose, and Mr. Brandon took my hand, as I thought, to help me up, instead of which, to my great surprise, he stooped and kissed it in the most open manner possible.

Aunt Christie was standing by, looking down upon us, so that she must have seen this, but she did not betray the least surprise. Tom and Liz were already plunging up the slope together, among deep layers of

dead leaves, and for some time nothing was said. At length he broke silence, by saying something to me about Miss Braithwaite. He was so sorry we had not met; he thought she would like to see me.

I replied, "Perhaps, then, she will come and call on me in a day or two," and he looked, I thought, just a little surprised, and walked by me in silence till I made some remark about the gathering damp, when, instead of answering, he began to talk of his regard for her, in short, of his great affection. She was excellent it appeared, she was remarkable, she was delightful. He broke off this eulogy with a sudden start.

"Well, if I mean to go at all I must go now. Good bye."

"Shall we not see you at dinner, then?" I asked.

"O yes, certainly;" he had passed through the little narrow gate that led into the shrubbery, and before he let me follow him he detained me a few minutes in conversation, till Tom and Liz came up by another path.

"It gets cold and damp," said Liz; "we ought to be in;" whereupon he roused himself, and saying once more, "Well, if I mean to go at all, I must not stay any longer," he and Tom, dashing through the shrubs together, made off to the stables.

I found they were still in one another's company when, going up to my own room afterwards, I saw

them riding down the Wigfield road together, to Wigfield Grange, Mr. Braithwaite's house; and I wondered, as I had done several times before, at the persevering manner in which these two spirits kept close together, though they had never seemed to be so very congenial.

If Mr. Brandon came into the room, Tom was sure to be in his wake, and if Tom took himself off, Mr. Brandon's attention seemed to be excited; he grew restless, and shortly followed him.

It was not till just before dinner was announced that they walked into the drawing-room. Tom looked and behaved exactly as usual, but on Mr. Brandon such a change had fallen that it was impossible not to notice it. All dinner-time he never once spoke, excepting in his capacity of carver, and in the evening when he joined us, he stood on the rug so lost in cogitation that he was quite unconscious of the inquiring looks which passed from one to the other.

"I say," observed Valentine to me, "Giles is quite out of sorts since he came from Wigfield. What's the row, I wonder?"

I had my own theory, and though I felt a kind of shame in admitting it, there was a heartache too. I had known and felt that for the last few days, whenever I spoke, he had turned his head instinctively to listen. That was over; he had left us at the gate as if he grudged the time that was to be spent at Wig-

field; he had come back and forgotten that grudge. Had Miss Dorinda said anything to him, or had the mere sight of her fragile form blotted everything else out of his mind and memory?

Tom was more talkative than usual; he seemed to observe Mr. Brandon's remarkable taciturnity, and to be doing all he could to make up for it; he asked Lou to play, and he talked to Mrs. Henfrey.

I felt that a sort of chill and restraint had fallen on us, and when Mrs. Henfrey observed that the thermometer had gone down, and there was a sprinkling of hoar-frost on the ground, I chose to consider that these sensations were partly owing to the weather.

"Where is papa?" said Liz to Valentine.

"Asleep in the dining-room."

"How bad that is for him; suppose we go and fetch him up? Will you come too, Dorothea?"

I was very glad of the proposal, and went with her, Valentine following; he opened the dining-room door; the lamp had been turned down, and in his easy chair before the glowing embers of the fire, sat the beautiful old man dozing at his ease.

He woke almost instantly,—What, what!—ah, ay, the children—what is it, my boy? do you want me?"

"No, father, but you must not sleep here."

"No, no, lazy old man; is that Miss Graham?"

"Yes; you'll come up-stairs, won't you?"

"Not yet, my boy; draw the sofa round there; and so Giles has been to Wigfield?"

He got up from his easy chair and exchanged it for the sofa, making us sit on it beside him.

"I wish that Wigfield was further," he continued; "there is always some trouble or other when he goes there. Child, my foot's asleep."

Liz sat down at his feet, and taking one on her knee began to rub it, while he, passing his hand over my hair, said—

"And so you must needs come down, too, and see what the old man was about?"

"Liz said I might come."

"You *might*! Yes, my sweet, you may always *come*; what I don't wish is that you should *go*."

Delightful he was to every one, and nobody ever seemed to be in his way. He was so accustomed to the caresses of the young, that when I took his hand between mine to warm it, he received the attention as a natural and common one, only remarking that it always made him chilly to go to sleep after dinner.

So we sat there chatting in the firelight about all sorts of things till the door was suddenly opened, and in marched Mr. Brandon.

"Well, Giles, you see I am holding a levée down here; did you think I was asleep?"

Mr. Brandon, I could not help thinking, was somewhat vexed when he saw us; and when Liz and Valen-

tine began to talk to him he answered shortly, and walked about the room with a sort of restless impatience.

"Giles," said his step-father, "I wish you would sit down."

Giles took a little wicker chair, and bringing it near the sofa, sat down, but could not be quiet long; he soon rose, and standing with his back to the fire, made a kind of occupation of the chair, and pressed a foot on the spell, or a knee on the seat, to test its strength. I knew as well as if he had told me so, that he wanted to talk to Mr. Mortimer, but no one else seemed to see it, and he sighed once or twice, with such restless impatience, that it pained me to hear him.

"Giles," said Valentine, "you were talking about singing last night, and what do you think Miss Graham says? why, that she never once heard you sing, and did not know you could."

"That is not odd; she has only been here a week."

"I have often said that I wished you girls would learn to accompany your brother," said Mr. Mortimer to Liz.

"We can't, papa; we have often tried, but we always put him out. Nobody does him justice in that way but Miss Dorinda."

Mr. Mortimer uttered a little grunt on hearing this.

"But I like those simple things best, which want no accompaniment," she continued.

"I hate trash," said Mr. Brandon, decidedly.

"Sing us something now, St. George."

Mr. Brandon excused himself, and I was so conscious that the proposal was utterly distasteful to him, and that, though he was concealing it as well as he could, he was out of spirits and exceedingly out of temper, that I did not venture to add my voice to the general request.

"I have not heard him sing for a fortnight," observed Mr. Mortimer, "and it is a treat that I seldom ask for." The chair continued to be put, as it were, through its paces under the hands of Giles; but he looked hurt, and when Mr. Mortimer added, "and I have said more than once that I should like to hear that French song again that he sung at the Wilsons'," he said, quickly, "So be it, then," and with a slight gesture of impatience, and no change of attitude, he instantly began.

Valentine often repeated those verses afterwards, or I should not have remembered them, so completely did the song and the manner of it take me by surprise. I had not expected anything particular, was not prepared, and it made the colour flush to my face and brought the tears into my eyes. It was not a

powerful voice, or rather, being so near to us, he did not bring it out; it was not very clear, at least not then, but there was something in it that I felt I should never forget—that I almost trembled at, so great was its effect on me.

Some man, it seemed, from dusty Paris, had plunged into the depths of Normandy, and there he had sat by the wood-fire of a farmhouse, and fallen in love with its mistress; but he went away from her, as it seemed, almost directly, and the ballad proceeded:—

Mon seul beau jour a dû finir,
Finir dès son aurore;
Mais pour moi ce doux souvenir
Est du bonheur encore.
En fermant les yeux je revois
L'éclos plein de lumière,
La haie en fleur, le petit bois,
La ferme—et la fermière.

He betrayed his reluctance to sing throughout, but went to the end of the ballad:—

C'est là qu'un jour je vins m'asseoir
Les pieds blancs de poussière;
Un jour—puis en marche et bonsoir
La ferme—et la fermière.

When he had finished no one spoke, no one even said, "Thank you." Dark as it was, surprise was evident; something had struck all the listeners. As for me, the echo of that song tyrannised over me, and I not only made up my mind fully that Miss Brai-

thwaite must be at the bottom of it, but also that he had been alarmed at some change for the worse in her health, for I had heard her spoken of as very delicate and fragile.

But how easily people may be mistaken! The very next morning, as Valentine and I sat plodding together over our Greek, while Liz and Lou were entertaining some morning visitors, and Tom and Mr. Brandon were together in the peculiar domain of the latter, we heard a remarkable rumble in the hall, which sounded like the rolling of wheels.

"Whew!" exclaimed Valentine, "here's the fair Dorinda!"

"Where?" I exclaimed, looking out of the window.

"Why, in the hall, to be sure."

Before I could ask what he meant, the door was slowly opened, and a lady was pushed in who was seated in a large bath-chair; she was a very tall, stout lady, and she almost filled the chair, which she guided by means of a little wheel in front, while a perspiring youth propelled her at the back. She must have been a great weight!

Valentine spoke to her, and helped to guide her chair into a place from whence she could see the whole room; her servant then withdrew, and she said—

"Is that Miss Graham? Valentine, will you introduce her to me?"

It was a pleasant voice that spoke, and I looked her in the face for the first time. She seemed to be about fifty years old, and was evidently quite a cripple; but her face was charming with cheerfulness, and her large, handsome features were quite free from any expression of pain or ill-health. Valentine did as he was desired. There was no mistake, this was Miss Dorinda Braithwaite, and I was so much amazed, that for a few minutes I could hardly answer her polite expressions of pleasure at making my acquaintance. She seemed to observe my confusion, and to be willing to give me time to recover. What she thought was the cause of it I could not tell; but I did my best to look and move as if I was not intensely surprised; though of course I was, and when, after talking to Valentine for some time, she again addressed me, I could behave like other people.

Mr. Brandon, Tom, and Lou presently entered. Lou kissed Miss Braithwaite, so did Mr. Brandon as composedly as if it was a matter of course. Her charming face lighted up with pleasure as she spoke to him, her fondness for him was most evident; but she seemed to treat him, I observed, as quite a young man, almost, in fact, as a mother might treat her son, and she had not been ten minutes in the room before I found out why Valentine had spoken of her as such a very excellent person. Without one atom of affectation she made it perceptible to us, or, rather, it became per-

ceptible to us, that "*God was in all her thoughts.*" She had a curious way, too, of talking about herself, as if it was just as agreeable to her to be a prisoner in that chair as it could be to us to walk—as if, being the will of God, it must, of course, be all right, and consequently most desirable, most pleasant.

I have known some people who, while they talked, seemed to go up to God; pierce some high majestic deeps, and reach towards what, in ordinary hours, is to us His illimitable absence. There was nothing of that sort here. It seemed rather that she had brought God down; God was come among us, and some of us were grateful and glad.

I don't know how she managed to convey the things she made apparent to us. She did not say them in so many words; but she thought them, and her thoughts became incidentally evident. She stayed to lunch, was wheeled up to the table, and had a little sort of shelf fixed on to the front of the chair, which served her by way of a table. I observed that she had a remarkable effect on Tom. He perceived that what gave a meaning to her life and satisfied her was real, and was to her a glorious possession. He always had taken an intense interest in things unseen. Here was some one who evidently came a good deal in contact with them, and felt concerning that difficult and tremendous thing, religion, not as if it was some hard

thing that one might do, but some high thing that one might attain.

She stayed about two hours, and Valentine all the time was not only silent, but crest-fallen and oppressed. St. George, on the contrary, though still very different from his usual self, appeared to feel her conversation comforting and elevating to his spirits,—for the gloom which had hung about him since the last evening began to fade by degrees, and at last he too joined in this talk, but not without great reserve, and more, as it seemed, to explain her remarks, than to advance any thoughts of his own.

When she said she must go, St. George and the Oubit between them pushed and pulled her great chair into the hall; most of the party went with her, Tom to carry her parasol, Liz and Mrs. Henfrey with some books that she had borrowed. Valentine presently returned, and shutting the door of the dining-room, in which Aunt Christie and I still remained, he performed a kind of war-dance of triumph and ecstasy round the table.

“She’s ruined my prospects,” he exclaimed. “She’s made me give it all up. I shall tell St. George it’s no go, and then I hope she’ll be happy.”

“Ye bad boy—O ye bad fellow,” said Aunt Christie, who, I think, was a little relieved herself that this visit was over, “are ye glad to get rid of that blessed saint? Look there, and be ashamed of yourself.”

We both looked out where she indicated. There was Tom, with his sailor's gait, walking beside her chair. Strange curiosity! His eyes while he listened had almost seemed to lighten, so vivid was the flash that came with those thoughts that he had questioned of her. There was often a strange awe in his soul which was very little connected with either fear or love; but O how glad he would have been of any glimpse or any echo coming from behind the veil!

St. George walked on the other side, guiding the chair with his hand, and when they came to the gate of the drive, which led to the road, they both took leave of her; then they vaulted over a little fence and began to walk across the fields.

"They are going to overhaul John Mortimer again," said Valentine. "I heard St. George asking Graham what he would do, and where he would go, and he answered that he would rather stop at home. St. George said, '*No, you wouldn't;*' and Graham actually gave in, and said, if he must go anywhere he would go there. But they don't care so much, I know, about their argument now, because they've seen Uncle Augustus, and he does not agree with John in those views of his, you know, as to the bad effects of a token coinage, and the moment they found that the two *experts* were on opposite sides, they left off trying to make it out."

So they were gone, and gone for the whole even-

ing; gone, also, against Tom's wish and at Mr. Brandon's will and pleasure. Very odd indeed, but not so odd as some other things. I went up to my room before we took our walk, and began to think all this over. Miss Dorinda Braithwaite, the girl with the heavenly countenance! I had seen her; she was a helpless cripple in a chair, and old enough to be my mother.

Did that really matter, or could it ever be likely to matter to me? I hardly knew, it was all so full of contradiction; but Tom had never talked privately to me but once since our arrival; this was a few days ago, and the subject was his pleasure at that early conversation in which I had "let it appear that I had forgotten the colour of Brandon's eyes! You cannot take the compliments, attentions, or even the apparent devotion of men too lightly," said my Mentor; "depend on it, they never mean *anything whatever*, unless they ask you point blank to marry them as soon as may be."

"Very well," I answered, "I shall not forget what you say."

So I thought of it in my room, and decided that for the present I would insist upon it that *nothing* meant *anything*.

We had plenty of amusement and talk that night, and music. It was very cold, and we did not sit up till the return of Tom and St. George; but after I

retired to my room and dismissed Mrs. Brand, whom I had soon done with, I heard their voices in the next room as I sat with my feet on the fender indulging in a pleasant reverie.

Tom's room was next to mine; the two fireplaces were back to back, and I had often noticed that Mr. Brandon and he used to talk together there at night before the former retired to his own room.

This evening was very windy and chill. They evidently had a fire, for I could hear them knocking the logs about. I also heard their voices, for they were talking in far louder tones than usual, and though Tom's soft voice was indistinct, Mr. Brandon's answers were so impressively clear that I was afraid I should soon hear the words, and as soon as I could I retired to bed, which was at the further side of the room; but even with my head upon the pillow I heard all the tones, though not the words, of a long argument. Mr. Brandon evidently had the best of this argument, and he also had the poker, for he emphasized his remarks with most energetic thrusts at the fire.

The imperative mood is used "for commanding, exhorting, entreating, and permitting." Mr. Brandon, to judge by his voice, put it through all its capabilities, and Tom sank to silence, till at the end of a long harangue a question seemed to be asked, and Tom answered. Then I heard words.

"You won't?" asked in a tone of sudden astonishment and anger.

"No, I won't."

"Then I say you WILL."

The harangue began again; it was vehement, the answers grew short. The harangue rose to eloquence, persuasion, entreaty; the answers grew faint. At last both voices became gentle and amicable. Whatever the dispute had been it was over, and not without some curiosity I heard Mr. Brandon close the door and steal softly upstairs to his own domain.

I was sure they had been quarrelling, and the next morning when I came down, I watched for their appearance that I might see how they accosted each other.

They came in together, and fully equipped for a journey.

"Going out before breakfast?" exclaimed Mrs. Henfrey.

"No, we breakfasted an hour ago," replied Mr. Brandon, coolly. "We are going to run up to town for—for a week or a fortnight."

I looked at Tom in surprise; he did not seem at all eager for the journey, but was quiet and gentle. He kissed me and was saying "Good-bye," when I exclaimed in a low tone, "Dear Tom, are you going to leave me here by myself?"

Tom shrugged his shoulders, and said, drearily,

that Brandon was bent on being off; he never saw such a restless fellow, he hated stopping at home.

"Come, old fellow," said Mr. Brandon, "we shall be late for the train, and my dog-cart is brought round."

He took my hand in his, and said something about his regret at leaving home when I was in it, and then he marched off after Tom. They got into the dog-cart and drove away.

"Ah!" said Mr. Mortimer, when they were gone, and we were seated at breakfast, "it was dull here for young Graham, very dull. Not used to a country life. No, they'll get on better in town."

"He certainly seems as if he had taken out a patent for holding his tongue," observed Valentine.

The sisters frowned at him and glanced at me. Mr. Mortimer went on—

"Giles wanted to be off yesterday morning, and came down to consult me about it the night before; but I reminded him of an engagement he had, and so they agreed to stay." He spoke with great deliberation and composure.

I answered, feeling hurt that my brother should be so misunderstood, and also feeling anything but pleased with Mr. Brandon—

"I am sure that Tom was very well content to be here; I think he went to please Mr. Brandon."

"Well," said Mr. Mortimer, calmly, "perhaps he

did, my dear; perhaps he did. St. George may have had reasons for wishing to go out."

"O yes, certainly."

"And if so, he could hardly leave his friend behind, could he? For my part, when he proposed the trip, I said, 'Go, by all means.'"

It was most evident to my mind that this journey was not of Tom's contriving, and that though the family supposed it to be done to please him, it was really done at Mr. Brandon's will and pleasure. I said no more, but when after breakfast I sat waiting in the morning room till Valentine came in to do his Greek, I felt that all my self-command was needed to conceal my extreme annoyance, surprise, and even shame.

What could this be for? why was he so very anxious all on a sudden to get away? I said to myself that I now knew he had been flirting with me, but he had not been obliged to go into it unless he liked. Why, then, in such a hurry to escape? did he think I had shown too much pleasure in his society, that it behoved him to take himself out of my way? I did not know what to think, but I felt that he had done very wrong to drag Tom from this quiet country place, where he had really been cheerful and pleased, and take him within two or three hours of Southampton, a place I never liked to think of his having anything to do with.

Enter Valentine.

"I'm so glad St. George is gone!"

"Why."

"Because now I shall have you all to myself. I wonder what he is going to do with your brother."

"You talk of Tom as if he was a child. I do not see myself how he could stop any longer here when your brother showed him so plainly that he didn't wish it."

"Well, you must admit that it was very heavy work amusing him here! There was nothing for him to do that he cared for. Dear me, what a sigh! I say—"

"Yes."

"If you think I am going to call you *Miss Graham* all my life, you are mistaken. The girls don't. So *as you have no objection*, I shall call you D.; that simple initial escapes the formality that I dislike, and is more distant than Dorothea. If I am encouraged, I shall sometimes add a simple expression of regard to show my kind feelings towards you."

"I shall not encourage you."

"Aunt Christie's going away to-day, so if you don't keep friends with me you will be very dull; she is never so well pleased as to be here."

"I love Aunt Christie, but though she is going I shall not encourage you."

"No; I believe if you had as many names as the *Smilex simulata*, you would like to be called by them

all. I saw a plant labelled once for the benefit of the ignorant public in Kensington Gardens — *Smilex simulata* — the Simulated Smilax, a Smilaceous plant. What do you think it was? why, a wallflower!”

“I consider you to be a kind of literary rag-bag full of scraps of information. I do not care for the illustration, and I shall at present not allow you to call me D.”

“I consider *you* to be oppressively clever. I don’t like you.”

“And I wish to begin the reading—”

“So we will, D., my dear.”

From that time he always insisted on calling me “D., my dear,” and at last I tired of telling him not, and became accustomed to the appellation. Indeed, after that first day he afforded almost my whole amusement, and devoted himself to me with a simple *naïveté* which was quite consistent with a good deal of plain speaking. He also afforded me occupation in helping him with his studies; but for this salutary tie I should have had nothing to do, for a visitor arrived to whom Liz and Lou devoted much of their attention, so much that I could not but wonder what they found to like or to admire. This visitor was a Captain Walker of the—Fusiliers, a dull man, silent to a degree, and who when he did talk seemed to have but one idea—his brother, his twin brother who had married their sister Emily. Of his brother he could

talk a little when other people were present; but when he was alone with Liz and Lou I used to think he must have talked of something else, for I observed several times that on my entrance there was a sudden silence, and Lou, by whom he was sitting, would look a little flushed, while Liz was generally stationed with her back to them, writing in a window.

It was about this time I think that a certain newspaper squib appeared, which caused much anguish to Mr. Mortimer, but which Valentine, though angry at it, could not help quoting with great glee when we were alone. I do not remember it all, but the precious effusion began thus:—

“Brandon of Wigfield, we do you to wit,
That to lecture the masses you're wholly unfit,
Worthy, but weak Mr. Brandon!
You haven't a leg to stand on,
'Don't cheer me,' you sighed,
'Us weren't going,' they cried,
And they hissed you instead, Mr. Brandon.

“Who are you, Sir, that argies and wrangles?
Who are you, Sir, that talk about mangles,
And suds, and the starching that follers,
As if you got up yer own collars,
And kittles, and pots, you young sinner,
As if you could cook your own dinner,
Or sew on one blessed pearl button,
Or hash a cold shoulder of mutton?
Worthy, but weak Mr. Brandon,” &c.

I was secretly enraged at this squib, and sympathized with Mr. Mortimer. I even ventured once when we were alone to express this sympathy, and the dear old man received it with evident pleasure; but whenever

his father was out of hearing Valentine's cracked voice might be heard crowing out—

“Worthy, but weak Mr. Brandon,
You haven't a leg to stand on.”

CHAPTER IX.

“I'm young and strong, my Marion;
None dance like me on the green;
And gin ye forsake me, Marion,
I'll e'en draw up with Jean.”

I DID not now sit in the morning-room, for I could not find in my heart to make Lou uncomfortable, and I observed that my proposal to Mrs. Henfrey that Valentine and I should read in the drawing-room with her was met with such ready willingness, that I could not but suppose she wished Captain Walker to have every opportunity for making himself agreeable.

After we had read, we took a walk or a drive; indeed, we were thrown together almost all day long, and I was so keenly aware of the folly I should commit if I indulged any dream with respect to Mr. Brandon, that I tried earnestly to write and walk, to talk and practise as much as I could, and starve him out of my thoughts by occupying myself with other things.

He had deliberately gone away in the very midst of his apparent interest about me. It was not to please Tom, that I had plainly seen; and there had been no talk of business.

“Well,” said Valentine, one day when we set out

for our walk, "I consider that Giles is in for a thousand pounds."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, don't you know that he gave Emily that sum when she was married, and promised it to the others?"

"No, I had not heard it."

"Well, he did; and he is to let me have the same sum to put me to college. That's what gives him so much power over me."

"I did not know he was rich."

"He isn't; but he has plenty. That, I am bound to say, is my pa's doing. Why, this house belongs to Giles."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; papa was his father's guardian. His father died suddenly, you know, before he was born."

"I have heard that."

"So papa and sister went and fetched poor mamma here, and she stayed till after Giles was born; she did nothing but cry, and made them so miserable. She used to sit, when she got a little better, under that laurustinus tree and nurse Giles, and cry over him. Then she said she should be happier if she went to her own people in Scotland; so they took her there, and she soon got better, and married Mr. Grant. Well then, most of what Mr. Brandon had left became the property of his child, and papa was his guardian, and

managed it so well, that by the time Giles was of age his patrimony was nearly doubled. Did you ever hear the story of how papa came to marry mamma?"

"No. Tell it me."

"Why, of course papa and mamma used to correspond about Giles, and papa wished him to go to school, and there was a kind of coolness between them, because papa thought it so silly of mamma to marry again so soon. Well, after Mr. Grant had been dead a year, there was some business to be settled, and mamma had some papers to sign about Giles. But papa had the gout and could not go to Scotland, so mamma had to come to him, and she left Giles behind, for fear he should want to get him and send him to school.

"She came here in a snow-storm, and my father was very cross and grumbling a good deal about his gout. He was nearly sixty then, and had been a kind of widower thirty years. When he found that mamma had left Giles behind he was very angry. I can't tell the story as well as sister does; it's the only one she ever does tell well. She was with papa, and when he said, 'Are there no possible means, madam, by which I can get that boy into my hands?' mamma said, 'I cannot tell what means you may have in reserve, but those which you have tried at present are quite ineffectual.' Sister thought they were going to quarrel, so she got out of the room as fast as she could; but

when she came in again (mamma was always considered a very fascinating person), she found papa in an excellent temper, and he told her he had been talking with Mrs. Grant, and she had promised to let him have her son. And so mamma did, you know, but she came with him and Liz and Lou and Emily also. I have always thought it showed a beautiful spirit of discernment in my dear mother, that no sooner was I born than she perceived my superior merit, and showed an open preference for me over all her other children. On the other hand, so blind is poor human nature that my father always had a kind of infatuation in favour of Giles. He sent Giles to Trinity, and wished him to study law, but he hates the law, and says if he marries he shall buy land and go and settle in New Zealand. It is a lucky thing for us that papa managed so well for him, for now Giles always persists that we have a claim on his property in consequence."

From day to day Valentine and I cultivated our intimacy. We went together to call on Miss Dorinda, we took rides together and went fern-hunting in the woods, we studied, we quarrelled and made it up again. We were at first glad to be together for want of other society, but by degrees we got used to each other, and liked to discuss in company the progress of Captain Walker's wooing, the various croquet parties we went to, and the neighbours who came to lunch and to call.

Once, and only once, Valentine gave himself a holiday from his Greek, and left me all the morning. About three o'clock he returned and burst into the room, exclaiming that he should not have been so late if he had not fallen in with a crowd of people running to farmer Coles', and declaring that one of his ricks was on fire.

"I ran after them, hoping to see the fun, and help to throw water, when Tim Coles, the farmer's own brother, lagged behind and began to lament and talk about his feelings. 'Come, Tim,' said I, 'you block up the stile; let me get over.' 'Ah!' said he, 'my poor brother! Blood's thicker than water.' 'So I perceive,' said I, 'so much thicker that it won't run.' Put that into the novel; it's much better than anything you can invent yourself. Well, we soon had the fire out. I was too late for the train, but though I had to wait for the next, I was glad; for Charlotte was there, and Prentice; they were waiting for old Tikey to come down from some missionary meeting he'd been to. We amused ourselves with *planting*. Charlotte said, 'If I were to plant you and what you frequently do, myself, and something indefinite, what would come up?'—but, dear me! you never can guess anything, and, besides, an old salt like you ought not to plant, you should fish. If I were to throw myself into the sea when you were fishing, what should you catch?"

"An odd fish?"

"No."

"A flat-fish?"

"No, you crab, but a great sole. A friend of St. George's used to say that he was all soul—so am I, except my body. Come, I'll give you another plant. If I were to plant the mother of hexagons painted gold-colour, and what I should like to give you, what would come up? Do you think it would be a bee orchis?"

"I consider you a very impertinent boy. Besides, they ought to spell."

"No, they belong to the botanical, not to the educated classes. *Scene for the novel*—'And here the graceful youth, producing a costly ring, and dropping on one knee, took her hand and pressed it to his finely-formed lips, as was his frequent habit.'"

"He did nothing of the kind," I exclaimed. "How dare you! you never did kiss it, and you never will. Do you think I am going to hang my hand over the end of the sofa that, as Sairey Gamp says, you 'may put your lips to it when so disposed'?"

"Why, you don't think I was in earnest, do you?" exclaimed Valentine, shaking with laughter. "Kiss your hand, indeed! I wouldn't do such a thing on any account, I can tell you! No, it was a scene." And he stuck a little ring on the top of one of his great fingers, and said in a more colloquial tone, "Just see if this fits, will you?"

"Yes, it fits pretty well."

"It only cost seven-and-sixpence."

"And quite enough, too, for it is a rubbishing little thing."

"Well, keep it, then, for the present, lest I should lose it. And now I am going to tell you a thrilling tale, and appeal to all your better feelings."

"Do."

"You must know, then, that the day Giles went away, he got up very early indeed; I heard him, and got up too, and went into his room while he was shaving. I told him I had only five shillings in my pocket, and put it to him, 'as a man and a brother,' whether, considering the state of his own finances, he had the heart to let such a state of things continue. It was once his own case—how did he like it? I asked. The wretch answered, '*O l'heureux temps quand j'étais si malheureux!*' and went on lathering himself in a way that was very unfeeling, considering how late my whiskers are in coming. 'What do you want to buy?' said Giles. I told him a ring. 'Whew!' he answered, 'a ring! Why can't you seal your letters with a shilling? Well, come,' he said, 'if you'll have your father's crest well cut, I'll give you five pounds.' 'What!' I answered, 'do you think I am such a muff as to want a signet ring? No, I want one for a present.' Well, by that time I had got the five sovereigns. 'A present!' said Giles, with infinite scorn,

‘for whom?’ I told him it was for a lady, and instead of treating the matter as if it was the most natural thing in the world, he laughed in an insulting manner, and then turned grave, and desired me not to make myself ridiculous by any such foolery; he wanted to know the lady’s name, and said if it was Fanny Wilson, I was most presumptuous; indeed, at my age, it would be very impertinent to do such a thing, and that my father would be very angry; he added, D. dear, that if I would only wait a couple of years, there really was no saying what might happen in that quarter. I said it was not Fanny Wilson. ‘Has it any reference, then, to that foolish boy, Prentice?’ he next asked. I could not altogether say that it had not. ‘Because if it has, and you give a ring to Charlotte on purpose to vex him, I shall be much disappointed in you,’ he said. I said I could not divulge the lady’s name, but of course I could not help laughing, because he was so grave and so angry, and seemed so astonished at my folly. No lady, he said, would accept a ring from a mere boy. ‘I’ll bet you all the money that I don’t spend on the ring,’ I said, ‘that this lady does.’ ‘If she does,’ said Giles, ‘I give you five sovereigns more.’ Only think of that! I know if he had not been in such a hurry that he would have made me tell him everything. As it is, D. dear, I can make myself happy in the hope of future pelf; the ring is for you.”

"For me? how dare you!"

"Yes, for you. It has been my happy privilege already to-day to make a fellow-creature perfectly miserable. Prentice is now, I have little doubt, tearing his hair."

Upon this I took off the ring and laid it inside the fender, where I told him it would remain unless he picked it up. Following his brother's lead, I also said that if he had done it in earnest it would have been very foolish, but as it was in joke it was impertinent.

"It's all Prentice's fault," he burst out. "He gave Charlotte a ring, and I shall never be able to subdue him unless I can match him; his insolence is insufferable. You should have seen his jealous misery to-day when I said, carelessly, that I was going to buy a ring. I hate that fellow—at least so far as is consistent with Christian charity I do. The great joy and desire of his life is to do what nobody else can; but if other young fellows can be engaged at nineteen, why there is no glory in it, and no grandeur either. However, I shall pick up the ring, and trust to your better feelings not to deprive me of all this money."

We argued and bickered some time, and then were reconciled; what, indeed, was the use of quarrelling with a youth whose simplicity was so transparent, and whose temper was so imperturbable?

That night the ring was sent to me with a polite note begging my acceptance of it. I returned it the

next morning before I left my room in a similar note, declining to receive it. This process was repeated every night and every morning till the next Sunday, when, as we were walking home from church, Valentine exclaimed, "I say, Prentice has been low all this week, and now he despairs. I heard him speak snappishly to Charlotte, upon which she replied, 'Well, how can I help it if they *do* correspond!' What an inconsiderate world this is! *I* would not, on any account, make a fellow so miserable as you have made Prentice!"

"Correspond? what do you mean!"

"Oh, I remarked to Prentice, in the course of conversation, that we corresponded; so we do—we write daily. *That* is entirely your doing. I should never have thought of such a thing."

The note with the ring in it was sent to me as usual that night, and for the first time Liz was with me. Mrs. Brand brought it in with the usual simper and the usual message: "Mr. Valentine's compliments, ma'am, and wishes you pleasant dreams." I told the story to Liz, and she was very much amused; but when I related the anecdote about the correspondence, she agreed with me that the joke must be put a stop to, and we thought the best thing for me to do, in order to effect this, would be to make over the ring to somebody else.

So I put it on her finger, and the next morning,

after breakfast, I saw it catch Valentine's eye, and heard him ask her where she got it.

"Oh," she replied, carelessly, "it is a thing that Dorothea had no value for, so she gave it to me."

"Did she?" said Valentine, with joyful readiness; "then the game is won at last! and I'll write at once for that photographing camera; it only costs 8*l.* 10*s.*, and now I can have it."

Lou and Captain Walker, who were evidently in possession of the facts, looked on amused, and I asked what the ring had to do with the camera.

Valentine replied that people could not give away what did not belong to them, therefore it was evident, by my own act, that I acknowledged the ring to be mine; I had accepted it and given it away; so he should at once appropriate the promised gift from St. George.

It was quite in vain for me to protest and declare; everybody was against me; even Mrs. Henfrey was roused to interest, and laughed, and demonstrated to me that nothing could be clearer than Valentine's case.

The camera was ordered that very morning, and we—that is, Valentine and I—spent from that time forth several hours of each day in taking portraits with it. Hideous things some of them were; they had an evil grin on their faces, so we tried sitting with gravity, and then the portraits glared at beholders with

desolate gloom. At last we grew tired of troubling ourselves as to the expression of our faces; sat carelessly, and some very good ones came out, which we spoilt by over-burning in the sun, or spotted by soaking in a badly-mixed bath.

We set the camera out of doors on the lawn, and worked at this new trade till at last, when we had wasted more than half the stock of chemicals, we arrived at tolerable skill, and took Captain Walker's unmeaning face, light eye, and sandy whiskers, so well, that even Mrs. Henfrey declared it to be a speaking likeness, and arrayed herself in velvet, and came out on the lawn to sit.

Mr. Mortimer encouraged this rage for photography on the ground that it was good for Valentine's lungs to be out so much in the air.

We took all the friends of the family, and all the cottagers. We took the home party in every variety of costume and attitude; we took Captain Walker leaning on Lou's chair; he evidently wished to look sentimental; she told him to give himself a military expression. In his desire to combine the two, he looked both foolish and fierce, but Lou was pleased. We then took him again in his full dress, with one hand pointing at nothing in the distance. His hand came out as big as his head, but what of that? nothing is perfect.

St. George being away, we adopted the smoking

room and used it as a portrait gallery, and stuck the pictures all over his walls with pins; there they hung to dry, while we, having stained our fingers of a lively brown with collodion, and having arrived at tolerable skill, sighed for new worlds to conquer, and took the portrait of every child and monitor in Giles's own particular village school, where he had a select company of little girls bringing up on purpose to be sent to Canada.

We then took portraits in character. Valentine bought a pair of moustaches, and came out as a brigand. I was dressed up as a fish girl, having a basket of mackerel on my head, which we got from the cook. Those mackerel stood a long time in the sun, and when they appeared at table the family declined to partake of them, but the photograph was the very best we ever did.

As time went on, I was the more glad of this occupation, for we heard nothing of Tom and Mr. Brandon, and as no one but Valentine and myself seemed to think this at all singular, I sometimes thought the family must know something of their movements; though, when I made any remark on Tom's long absence, Mr. Mortimer or Mrs. Henfrey would reply to the effect that it was dull in the country.

One day, when the weather was particularly fine, and we, after working hard at our Greek, had taken some very successful photographs, Valentine got Liz

to lend him the ring, and asked me just to put it on while my portrait was being taken as a bridesmaid. I declined, for I had a suspicion that some further torture to Prentice would ensue, but as he made a great point of it, and I did not like to yield, I at last went in and ensconced myself in the smoking room. As I stood by the table he shortly entered, bearing the ring on a large silver waiter, and following me about the room, laughing and begging me to put it on. He walked after me round and round the table. I then retreated before him till the walk became a run, and I at last darted out of the room and ran upstairs, he striding after, vowing that I should wear it. In that style, both out of breath with laughing, we ran up one staircase and down another, up the gallery and along the wing, the ring rattling and dancing on the waiter, and Valentine with cracked voice vociferating and quoting; till, stopped at last by the window seat, I turned to bay quite breathless, and he dropped on one knee and held up his waiter with the ring on it, still laughing, but unable to articulate a word.

At this precise point of time a door close at hand flew open, and, somebody coming out, nearly tumbled over Valentine's legs.

Mr. Mortimer.

Nothing could exceed the intense surprise of his countenance when he saw Valentine's attitude and the ring. In spite of our laughter, it was evident that this

little tableau had greatly struck him, and after a pause of a few seconds, he turned again very quietly into his dressing room and shut the door behind him without saying a word.

Now if he had laughed or spoken, I should not have thought so much of it, but that withdrawal and that great surprise were very mortifying, because it seemed to show that he did not treat the matter as the silly joke of a boy.

Valentine saw this as well as I did, and when he rose from his knees he looked very foolish. I was not in the best humour possible, and as we walked downstairs together in a very crest-fallen state, Mr. Mortimer's surprise being far more disconcerting than Valentine's joke, I said I thought he had better go and explain the whole thing to his father, make light of it, and expressly say that the ring was only offered as an ornament to be worn in a portrait.

For once he was out of countenance, and made excuses. His father, he was sure, would ask what he meant by it, perhaps would enquire if he meant anything serious.

"He will say nothing of the kind," I answered with some asperity; "ridiculous! Even if he did, you would only have to speak out and say 'no,' like a boy and a Briton."

"I sha'n't say anything of the sort," he answered,

sulkily. "I like you better than any girl in the world. Charlotte's nothing to you, nor Jane Wilson either."

I was very angry with him for talking such nonsense, but I argued the point with him, and proved by force of reasoning that he and I were friends and could be nothing else. He began to yield. I might be right. I summed up the facts, and his mind inclined to agree with me. Then why had he been so foolish? He said he didn't exactly know. I supposed it must have been out of perversity. He thought it must have been, and, recovering his spirits, began to whistle.

So having by this time returned to the lawn, I sat down on a heap of mown grass, and began to harangue him on the necessity of his going to explain matters to his father, when I suddenly forgot the subject, in consequence of a circumstance which took place, and I did not think of it again for at least an hour.

He was sitting at my feet, playing with the mown grass, and blushing, when hearing footsteps close to us he looked up and exclaimed, "Why here's Giles, I declare!" and Mr. Brandon, stepping up, shook hands with me and looked at me with some attention.

No wonder, for I was arrayed in white tarlatan, I had a crown of flowers on my head, and my upper skirt was filled with bunches of lilac, laburnum, and peonies. Captain Walker had taken great pains to persuade Lou to be taken dressed as a bride, while

Liz and I strewed flowers before her in the character of bridesmaids. At the last moment, when all seemed propitious, Lou had failed the poor man, but Liz and I, determined not to have the trouble of dressing for nothing, intended to be taken without her.

"Oh, Mr. Brandon," I exclaimed, "you are come home! Where is Tom? is he up in his room?"

"No," he answered, cheerfully, and as if he wished me to think his announcement a commonplace one, but could not quite manage it. "I left him behind with the Captain. He sent his love to you. We only spent four days in town, and I have been cruising about with them ever since. They put me ashore yesterday at Gosport."

"He is not ill?"

"No—no, certainly not; I never saw him looking better, nor the Captain either."

I had already stayed at Mr. Mortimer's house nearly the whole of the month for which we had been invited. Tom, I could not but think, was treating him very cavalierly by this strange withdrawal, and here was I left alone with no directions how to act, and a positive certainty now, that there was something in the background which I did not understand.

I said I hoped he had brought me some letters. He answered, with the same open air of cheerfulness, No, he had not, but that Tom had promised to write very soon.

"Hang him!" said Valentine, with sudden vehemence. "Promised to write to his own sister! But," he added, in a sympathising voice, cracked though it was, "never mind, D. dear; you must stop, you know, till he comes to fetch you, and won't that be a trial to this child! Never mind! he'll try and bear it."

There was something very affectionate in his manner, and as Mr. Brandon did not say a single word, but merely stood by looking on, he continued his remarks, interspersing them with many quotations and jokes, to which I could not respond and Mr. Brandon did not.

My sensations of shame at the way in which I had been left on the hands of this family, the fear lest I should intrude, and the consciousness that they were perfectly aware that Tom cared nothing either for their feelings in the matter or for mine, so much overpowered me that I sat down in the glorious sunshine on my heap of grass, mechanically holding my lap full of flowers, and wondering what I was to do if neither Tom nor my uncle did write before the end of the week.

Still Mr. Brandon stood like a statue beside me, and still Valentine talked; but I only heard his words as if they had been a slight noise a long way off that had nothing to do with me. I was thinking on the uncertainties of wind and tide. My uncle had put

to sea, and who could tell when he might be in port again?

A momentary silence recalled me to myself. Valentine, having finished all he had to say, paused, and then exclaimed, with sudden vehemence—

“Now, D. dear, I shall never believe you again when you say that you can’t help moving. If you would only sit in this way you would make a lovely negative, I’m positive. As for Giles, he is as still as a stone. How I wish I could take him with his nose relieved so beautifully against that laurel tree!”

I answered that as Liz did not come, I would go in and dress for dinner.

I did go in, and found Mrs. Brand in my room waiting for me, and pushing a letter into her pocket.

“Is that from Brand?” I asked.

She said it was, and, declaring that I was very late, began to excite a most unnecessary bustle, pulling out gowns and sashes, and strewing my possessions about the room.

“Don’t be so nervous,” I said. “I will not ask you any questions.”

Instead of answering, she reminded me that visitors were expected to dinner, and pretended to be very anxious about the plaiting of my hair. Her agitation made her longer than usual about my toilet, but that was a comfort, for I wanted a little time, not to gain information, for that at present I shrank from, but to

gather courage, and become able to attend to what was about me.

I had a suspicion floating in my mind. I had cherished it for some time. The foundation for it was very slight, and I was anxious not to betray it on any account, but to appear cheerful and easy about Tom till the last moment before I was compelled to have the suspicion verified.

I had so completely subsided into the family during the last fortnight, and become so accustomed to pay Mr. Mortimer the little attentions of a daughter, instead of receiving from him the attentions of a host, that when I advanced into the long drawing-room a certain change of manner in him arrested my attention instantly.

He spoke to me, set a chair for me near his own, and, making some kind remark about Tom, said, as if on purpose to set me at my ease, that as my brother could not come back, he hoped I should make up for it by prolonging my own stay as long as I could make it convenient or find it agreeable. To this formal invitation I returned a grateful answer; but I derived a kind of notion, from the manner of it, that it was at Mr. Brandon's suggestion. I thought he perceived the likelihood of my receiving no directions, and wished to spare me the pain of feeling that I was encroaching by letting me first have an invitation to stay.

Mr. Mortimer received my answer politely, but the

kind of familiar, almost loving, manner which he had assumed towards me of late was altered. He had become courteous again, and treated me as he did his other guests who now began to arrive.

The fine woman was present, and her daughter Jane. This young lady had a very large fortune, and I had often heard her talked of. I looked at her with some interest. She had been called a heavy-footed girl, and she certainly was no sylph, but I thought her rather a fine young creature, and observed that her mother kept a watchful eye upon her, noting who talked to her, and who came to her side. Specially she was watchful of Mr. Brandon, and when he talked to Jane, which he did rather often, I thought that the daughter was much pleased, but that the mother was not pleased.

Neither need have cared; there was no interest in his manner that could give reasonable hope to the one or fear to the other.

Captain Walker took me down to dinner, and Lou sat as far from him as the length of the table would permit.

Captain Walker was eminently stupid that day, and I was eminently silent. I had heard before all his anecdotes about his twin brother; they never varied in the least, but they were told with confidential earnestness, and were supposed to demand all the intellect of the listener to enter into them, and laugh in the

right place. Not being in the least funny, we had sometimes laughed in the wrong place, but this we soon found disconcerted him, and we took care now always to laugh when he said, "Wasn't that droll?" or "Wasn't that witty?"

Mr. Brandon sat on my other side, and Jane Wilson talked to him. She was animated and full of interest; full of curiosity too, and wanted to hear about a cruise that she heard he had been taking with a friend of his in a yacht, a friend whom she wished she had seen more of, for he seemed to be a very singular young man.

Giles escaped rather pointedly from this subject more than once; the third time she mentioned it he turned to me, and addressed me for the first and only time during dinner, saying something intended to show her that I was the sister of his yachting friend.

During the rest of the evening I felt impelled to watch him, and wonder whether he had anything in his mind which he would communicate to me. He seemed aware of this, and never approached me. If he had anything to say that was certainly not the time. Once I chanced to be standing in the same group with him, but he remained mute till it dispersed, and only Valentine was left, when he said to him—"Oubit, I shall expect you to read with me before breakfast to-morrow."

"All right," said Valentine. "Well, D. dear, how

did you get on at dinner time with your brilliant companion?"

"You will be overheard, Val," said St. George.

And Valentine continued in a lower key—"Silly of Lou to persist in sitting apart from him. Now, if you and I had been together, we should have been as happy as possible. I say, I hate this black gown; why don't you wear white? Isn't this thing hideous, Giles?"

Mr. Brandon being thus directly appealed to, just glanced at the offending array, but made no answer, and presently Jane Wilson came up.

"Mr. Brandon, you are wanted to sing a duet."

"With whom?"

"With me."

As Jane Wilson led him off I thought she had a pretty piquant manner, but I observed that her mother had moved to the piano before them, and was looking over the music.

Three duets were produced one after the other.

"Oh," said Mrs. Wilson, "my dear child, have you the temerity to wish to sing this with Mr. Brandon? It will make your defects too evident."

Jane put up the second—"Oh, you have had no lessons on this one, love."

The third was proposed.

"This will do very well," said Mr. Brandon, carelessly.

"German," said Mrs. Wilson, "is so very unbecoming to the voice, and your voice does so completely kill Jane's, that really——"

"Why should she not sing a solo then?" said Mr. Brandon. "This one looks pretty." He placed one on the piano and walked away from the mortified girl and gratified mother, quite unconscious as it seemed of the feelings of either, and utterly indifferent as to whether he sang or not.

"Isn't that droll?" said Valentine softly to me. "Everyone but Giles can see the preference in that quarter."

"He does not see it then?"

"Evidently not, and I am sure he would not like it if it was pointed out."

"Why?"

"Oh, because I have often heard him laugh at fellows who leave the wooing to the ladies, and say nothing was worth having that did not cost a man some trouble to get, and he should not thank any woman for doing his work for him."

"He is quite right, but if he does not see when it is done for him, why then he is a short-sighted mortal."

"D., my dear, I do not think there is much fear lest you should follow in J. W.'s steps. You will take a great deal of earning, I expect."

"People generally call that winning."

"No, what they get by good luck or chance they say is won, but what they work for they say is earned. Now if I could earn you——"

"Don't talk nonsense; you never would, even if you tried, which you never will."

"What do you know of my future? Do you pretend to be a prophetess? Now my impression is that I *shall* try, and if so, that I shall probably succeed."

"I consider it very impertinent in a boy like you to talk in this way."

"But it won't be impertinent when I'm a man! I am considering what will probably happen when I am a man. Valentine Mortimer, Esq., of Trin. Coll., Cambridge. I think I see him now; he comes riding to the strand on his fine black mare, his whiskers, I perceive, are brown; he draws the rein, the yacht rocks in the offing, a lady waves a handkerchief——"

"Well, go on—He comes on board in the market boat with the vegetables, singing 'Rule Britannia,' but by the time he has stepped on deck he is very ill, and says, 'Oh, please let me go back to my papa, and I'll never do this any more.'"

"So he is put ashore, and the lady becomes a *Smilex simulata*."

"Does that follow?"

"On philosophic and general grounds, I should say so decidedly. Is it likely indeed in a country where

there are more women than men, that each woman should have more than one good offer?"

"Did I hear you say good?"

"You did. Look at my height; is that nothing? Look (prophetically) at my whiskers; will they be nothing?"

"I should expect to find that remarkably eligible ladies would have several good offers, if the one you seem to promise me is a specimen of a good one."

"Remarkably eligible! Do my ears deceive me? or can it be that you allude to yourself?"

"Of course; you would hardly be ambitious of securing any thing not remarkably eligible; besides, with those brown whiskers that are coming, to what might you not aspire, especially if you are not plucked in your 'little go?' And to tell you the truth I sometimes think you won't be, now that I have taken such pains with your Greek."

"You had better mind what you are about," exclaimed Valentine, shaking with laughter. "This sort of thing may be carried a little too far," and as he spoke a little piece of cotton wool flew out of his ear, and performing a short arc, dropped on to the floor. He picked it up hastily and restored it, but his brother who was passing before us paused as if struck by the sight, and turning towards him, murmured in a melancholy tone,—“And certain stars shot madly from their spheres, to hear the sea-maid's music.”

CHAPTER X.

"Quoth the raven, 'Nevermore,'"—*Edgar Poe.*

THAT night I asked Mrs. Brand what Brand had said in his letter.

She replied, that he had said master's shirts wanted new wristbands; and there had been a hole burnt in one of the best tablecloths; that the captain of the yacht being ashore one day, Mr. Brandon had persuaded master to let him steer, and had as nigh as possible run down a *lighter*; that the cook had lost two basins overboard; and that Mr. Graham was all right.

The last piece of information was what I wanted, and I slept well after it.

At breakfast-time the next day, I observed that Mr. Brandon seemed in excellent spirits; and when I caught his eye, he did not look at all like a man who had any disagreeable news to communicate. He preserved his air of open cheerfulness; and when Valentine and I came up into the drawing-room to do our Greek, we found him standing on the rug arguing with Liz, declaring that she had nothing to do, and was very much to be pitied in consequence. Liz said she had a great deal to do, and declined to be pitied.

He then began to mourn and lament over his school. "Why did she never go and see it?"

"Oh, you go yourself every day."

"But I cannot superintend the needlework; besides, you know that when I went out I entreated you girls to look in now and then."

"Dorothea has been there several times," answered Liz.

"Yes," I said; "but not to teach. We went, at first, to take the children's portraits."

"Not in school hours, I hope."

"Oh, no; on their half holiday."

"And then she made friends with the mistress," said Valentine; "and taught that ugly girl, Mercy Porter, to do double-knitting. Do you know what that is, Giles?"

"No. Did you accompany Miss Graham on these visits?"

"You will be thankful to hear that I did, Giles. I hope I know my duty. There is but a step, you know, between us; so no wonder I tread closely on your heels."

Liz, as he said this, was leaving the room; and when she shut the door, St. George answered with unexpected heat and asperity,—

"I've often told you that I hate and detest that expression, '*step-brother*.' I don't acknowledge any such relationship."

"Well, Giles," said Valentine, humbly, "I think we both talk now and then of our step-sisters."

"That's a different thing," he exclaimed, in the face of facts. "Your father is nothing to them, but he is to me; and if I ever heard you call me seriously your step-brother——"

"As if I should think of such a thing!" cried Valentine, firing up with sudden indignation. "Now, did you ever hear me do such a thing seriously in your life—did you?"

"You young scapegrace," answered Mr. Brandon, with a short laugh, but still looking heated; "if I did regard you in that light, I would——"

He emphasised his words by giving Valentine a slap on the head with a thin loose pamphlet that he was holding, and by approaching his clenched fist very closely to that young gentleman's nose. It was a little awkward for me, for I am sure he had not quite made up his mind whether he was in joke or earnest.

"You would what?" cried Valentine, seizing it. "I say this is assault and battery, Giles, sir! Let me alone. You would what?"

By this time, restored to good temper, they were half wrestling together; but Mr. Brandon soon got free. The Oubit received several other noisy but harmless blows with the pamphlet, and was pushed down again on the sofa, still vociferating,——

"You would what, Giles? You would what?"

"Why, I would treat you very differently from what I mean to do," he replied.

And picking up his pamphlet and charging me to be strict, he presently departed; but in two minutes he came back again, and said to Valentine,—

“You are going to have a visit from the magistrate this afternoon, a domiciliary visit; and you had better clear out a little of your rubbish—those two miserable mallards, with cotton wool for eyes; and that peck of feathers, which you call a cock. Your father thinks the arsenical paste you dress your birdskins with may be injurious to your lungs.”

Valentine looked aghast.

“You put that into his head,” he exclaimed.

“Did I? Well, as I said before, you had better look out; or, take my word for it, he’ll teach these birds of yours to fly.”

“If he does,” said Valentine, “I will take him up to *your shop*—I declare I will. You’ll blow yourself up some day with your chemicals, and it shall not be my fault if he doesn’t think so. You’ll have a visit too, sir. I must do my duty by you, Giles. You’ll see two majestic figures standing in your doorway, and the younger one denouncing you. What will you say then, I should like to know?”

For a moment St. George stood stock-still, as if he was really considering this ridiculous threat; then,—

“*Scene for the novel!*” he exclaimed. “His elder brother, waving off the graceless youth, replied,—

'Take thy BEAK from out my den,
And take this Daniel from my door
(Quoth the Oubit 'Nevermore).'

He then charged me to be strict, said he was going to his school, and with that he departed.

"I'm sorry I vexed old Giles," said Valentine, when he had smoothed his dishevelled locks; "particularly as he has been so generous."

"What has he done?"

"Done! Why, given me the money like a brick, and made no difficulty about it."

"I hope you told him that I only accepted that ring by mistake."

"I not only told him all about how it happened, but I told him, honourably, that it was all a joke. I went to his room when he was shaving. At first I felt very sheepish. I don't exactly know why; and (hang him) I am sure he enjoyed my being out of countenance. At last, just as I had screwed up my courage to speak, he said—'Well, old fellow, lost or won?' So I said 'Won.'"

"Then I hope he made game of you; and said it was presumptuous of you."

"No, he didn't."

"But what was it that he did say?"

"Why he said, 'Then there's your money.' And there I found it laid ready on his desk. Somebody must have told him."

He paused, and whistled softly, as if reflecting on the possible author of this communication.

"But I had something to tell him that soon drove that out of his head," he observed. "Dorinda has done for me! I promised St. George quite solemnly that I would seriously reflect, and all that, you know, while he was away, whether I could make up my mind about being a clergyman? And I told him to-day that I had decided I wasn't fit; and I thought I had better make short work with it, and say at once that I couldn't get up any particular wish to *be* fit. As soon as I could venture to look at him, I could see how put out and vexed he was. 'You need not think that I shall sanction your going to Cambridge,' he said, 'if that is the case.' When he's really displeased I always give him a soft answer—that's a religious thing to do, and, by experience, I know it answers. So I said I was very sorry; but I hoped he would tell my father, for I did not like to tell him myself; and he was always so kind that I depended on him to get me out of this scrape. I say, isn't Giles a good fellow?"

"He is very good to you; but I am not at all obliged to him for taking Tom away just because he was tired of staying here himself."

"I told him the whole story about the ring, and then about Dorinda—at least, so much of both as he would listen to; and he agreed to tell papa. And then he asked me the cost of the camera, and said, if I

liked to give him back the five sovereigns, he would pay for it. That's what I call fraternal."

He then plunged into his Greek; and I, while I listened, felt suddenly that I need not flatter myself that this help given was to be, or ever had been, of any use. Some other career would now be fixed on for the Oubit. So I thought I would not give him a lesson after that day. And I listened to every passing foot on the stair, longing to waylay Mr. Brandon if he should come down, and get him, at least, to tell me whether Tom would soon come and fetch me away; hurt because he had disliked my going to his school; and suddenly so ashamed and so covered with, and hampered with, a new humility at finding myself left to the kindness of this family, that it seemed to be almost taking a liberty to occupy their rooms and sit upon their chairs and sofas.

I did hear St. George's foot as he passed the door; but I had not courage to stop him. He had made it obvious to me that he did not want to talk to me. I had believed, during his absence, that he had partly retreated to get away from me; and now he had not even got my uncle to write to me. I thought he should have done that, as I was left with his people.

I presently saw him, through the window, get over a stile and cross the fields in the direction of his school. There was nothing to be done—nothing whatever; but I felt as if the sweet sunshine of that morning would

not warm me. And when Valentine, having finished his Greek, went down to the camera, I went upstairs, and spread some drawing materials before me.

He shouted up to me several times as I sat in the window; but I would not come down, and was idly taking the view from the window, when I heard St. George's voice below. He had returned some other way from his school. In a few minutes his foot was outside the door, and he hastily entered.

"What, Miss Graham, indoors this lovely May morning?"

"The window is open. I have the air here."

He darted a look at me.

"There is Valentine, moping and mourning because of your desertion; and the Captain in despair, at your not coming to group the sitters."

"I would have come if they had said they wanted me."

Upon this he passed to the open window, standing with his back to me; and, adjusting a pocket telescope which he had taken from the table,

"I am afraid," he began,—and stopped "to alter the focus,—“I am afraid you have been uncomfortable and anxious about Tom. I should have mentioned him before, but I have not been alone with you.”

"I only wish to know what *you* think."

"*Oh, I* feel quite comfortable; he is safe enough for the next five or six months; and the Captain will

not easily be persuaded to put into Southampton again!"

You ought not to have taken him there was my thought, but I only said "Thank you."

Still he stood with the telescope to his eye, and his face to the window.

"I did not know," he said, "till I saw you again yesterday, that you had any suspicion to cause discomfort concerning him, and cast a shadow over your happiness. Mrs. Brand was sure you had not."

"Oh, then he asked her," I thought to myself.

He turned round as he said these words, and observing that his own shadow fell over me, and was dark on my drawing-paper, he smiled, and moving aside, continued: "But now I hope the shadow cast by Tom will withdraw as completely as mine has done, and that you will go down and amuse yourself with the camera."

I rose mechanically to go down, as he seemed to expect. "As completely as mine has done," was my thought as I put away my drawing materials; "I wonder when your shadow will withdraw,—if ever."

I went down, Mr. Brandon remaining in the drawing-room; some morning visitors had joined the party below, and their portraits were taken. When they retired, Valentine and the Captain began to set these portraits in the sun, occasionally shouting to Giles to come and be taken too, and he declining.

At last his brother and sisters made a rush upstairs, and bore him down with them in triumph. He declared that he was very busy, that he had a lecture to write, that he hated the smell of collodion, and that he had not answered his letters; but the sense of the family being against him, he submitted with a tolerably good grace, and sat down, desiring us to tell him when we were ready, that he might call up a look.

In the meantime, as we were quite ready, I only waited till he had settled himself in the chair, and his mind had wandered away; then I withdrew the slide, the right number of seconds were counted, and it was only when the slide was clapped down again that he knew what we had done.

The portrait came out in our best style. Shall I ever forget his disgust when he saw it—particularly when everybody else declared it to be capital?

“That *meant* for me,—that odious sentimental fellow! Take me again, and smash it. It’s a libel.”

So far from being a libel, it was the record of his very best expression—the expression of a strong man with keen feelings, when he yields to some momentary fancy, and wanders pensively into the land of dreams.

“Why, you frequently have that look,” said Valentine, “when you are thinking. Give it to my father; hang it in his dressing-room; he will like it, if you don’t.”

Mr. Brandon demanded to be taken again: we did take him—his expression was steady almost to defiance,

and seemed to challenge the scrutiny of mankind. In the meantime, being privately instructed, I bore off the first portrait and hid it.

"By-the-bye," I heard him say, as I approached again, "I am not going to have my smoking-room turned into an exhibition and school of art. I found pinned up there, seventeen portraits of Val and two dozen and one of Miss Graham—all vile, and most of them distorted; several of you, Walker, and a notable collection of groups. I have taken the liberty to turn them all out; you'll find them on the morning-room table; but I wish to remark, that if ever I find such things in my den again, I shall take severer measures with them."

"Some people would have considered their room to be embellished by them," I observed; "and really I think it was a delicate attention to hang your walls with pictures of your school-children."

"Was it intended as such?"

"She did not say it was," replied Valentine; "but if we had known you were coming home we should have taken them away."

"Well, I forgive the past, because it merely arose from utter forgetfulness of my existence. Stop, I am not quite ready—now."

He was now sitting again for the third time, the second portrait being pronounced by all too much like a brigand for private life.

The third was cheerful enough, and was said to be tolerably good, so Valentine entered the three in the book in which we recorded all these works of art.

“Giles Brandon, Esq., commonly called St. George.

“1. He sweetly dreameth.

“2. He says he won’t.

“3. He smiles at fate.”

He laughed when we showed him the entries, and asked if we had now done with him.

“Because, if I am supposed to have done my duty by my family, I shall be glad to go.”

I said we had done with him, and he went to his writing with alacrity.

The very next morning the expected letter arrived. It lay on my breakfast plate, and was not from Tom, but from my uncle; when I saw that, I had not courage to open it, but kept it till after breakfast, and then ran up to my room, locked the door, took it out and began to read. The first sentence made me quite easy for the present about Tom.

“Dear Dorothea,” it began, “Tom and I have been laying out some plans together for cruising off the coast of Iceland this summer.” Perfectly right, I thought,—perfectly prudent of my uncle,—a very good thing to do; but I went on to the next sentence, and found that it was a kind of apology to me. He wanted Mrs. Brand,—could not very well get on without her,

—was sorry on my account, as I should probably have wished to retain her; but I could get another maid. I should not want money. Of course I could see, being a girl of sense, that a five months' cruise away from England, and up so far north, was out of the question for me, but I should have my own way in choosing my home meanwhile. I might live with Miss Tott if I liked, for Tom had written to her, and she had no objection to have me. If I did not like, I was free to decline, for it had been left open.

I need not fret, and should not, he supposed, at what was inevitable: he could not give up Tom, and he could not have us both. His choice was therefore made, but I could settle in any place I liked, provided it was not Southampton; and then, when they wished to have me, or I wished to come on board, I could do so; in fact, I could always spend a few weeks on board when it suited me. This being settled, and I no doubt agreeing with him as to its desirability (in fact, if ever there was a girl of sense I was that girl), he should proceed to business, and tell me that he had paid into a certain bank, which he named, the sum of 180*l.*, which was to last me a year, and I was to draw it quarterly.

He intended always to allow me that sum, and should settle it on me, so as to make me independent of others, and even of himself. He did not say that he should leave me anything more in his will, and he

did not say that he should not; all he wished was that I should not reckon on such a thing. If I married, no doubt I should do myself justice and marry prudently, and I was by all means to let him know beforehand; in the meantime I must be careful not to get into debt. He had heard from my father, who seemed to be very unsettled, and talked of going to California to look about him. Tom was well, and sent his love.

“And, my dear Dorothea,” it concluded, “I am yours sincerely,

“G. ROLLIN.”

My impression is, that I read that letter over at least twenty times. I did not shed a tear over it; there was little in it to touch my feelings, only to agitate, disappoint, and shock me. I had lost my home, and was not to see my best friend for several months; but he was still good to me, and had provided for my comfort.

Again and again I read it; first I was foolish enough to think I could persuade him to change his mind, but as I reflected, and still continued my reading, I perceived the hopeless nature of such an attempt. To write a letter was a great undertaking for him, and he had not done all this without consideration, and as he thought necessity.

I might, if I chose, or if I could, believe that these changes would make but little practical difference to

me, for was I not told that I could express my wish to come on board, or that they could write for me? But would they? I remembered Ipswich, and my heart sank, but still I shed no tears. Indeed, this was no new thing—I was quite used to it; but there was this difference, that I might now be my own mistress, live where I pleased, and occupy myself as I chose. But my uncle! he had been good to me, kind to me, even fond of me. I thought of that, and that I had lost him, and tears began to choke me. But I did not cry long: the restraint and discipline of so many years at school had at least the effect of enabling me to command myself. I sobbed a little while with passionate regret and yearning, and then dried my eyes, feeling that now it behoved me to act, and to do it immediately.

What, then, did I mean to do? I was entirely free to do as I chose. I alone was responsible. Reason and conscience told me that I ought to go—that I must not take undue advantage of the hospitality which had been so kindly extended to me. But then I longed to remain: my floating home was a home no more; everything else that I cared for was under the roof which now sheltered me; and I longed to remain in it a little longer—just a little while—and not banish myself from it perhaps for ever.

I sat down to think this over, and had little doubt that Mr. Brandon knew of the plan which had just

been unfolded to me. And yet he had treated me with particular indifference ever since his return. He was now the only member of the family who called me "Miss Graham;" and once or twice, when I had been talking, he had smiled in a way that gave me pain. It was like the smile of one who, from his vantage-ground of superiority, is pleased and amused with the conversation of a child.

It was a glorious morning. I saw Valentine, whose Greek I was neglecting for the first time, idly wandering on the lawn, and gardening among the flower-beds; Lou was pacing the gravel-walks with her lover; Liz was sitting on a bench, reading a novel; and across the fields, in the distance, I saw Mr. Mortimer and Giles approaching. This was just what they would all do, and how they would all look, when I was gone. Of how little consequence I was to them! I had no family to belong to, nothing and no one to whom I could devote myself! Oh, what should I, what could I do?

Thinking of this, tears came again; but I was too much astonished, excited, and bewildered for weeping to last long. Thoughts began to crowd upon me: the perplexity of too much liberty made wild work with my pulses; that standing alone, and yet being obliged, as it were, to set off and walk instantly in some direction or other, tore my mind with conflicting emotions. I was like a person deserted on a wide common of

green grass, with no paths and no object in sight, and yet the certainty that it must be traversed ere any place of shelter could be found.

Kneeling down, I tried to pray, but my mind was confused, and became more so every moment; but I was alive to what passed, for I heard the lunch-bell ring, and thinking that it would be easier for me to meet the family in the garden than at table, I put on my bonnet, took my parasol, and ran down the back staircase, and through the court-yard, into the shrubbery, from whence I emerged, and approached the group as quietly as I could.

Something in the manner of more than one made me think that the contents of my letter were known. They did not cease to talk, and took no direct notice of me, but allowed me to mingle with them till, gradually and quite naturally, I became involved in the discussion which was going on, and we all walked in to luncheon together. But here my desired self-possession gave way. Liz said, in a sympathising tone, "Come, and sit by me, dear."

"No, I say that's a shame!" exclaimed Valentine; "this is her place. Sit by me, D. dear."

Whereupon I found myself, before I knew what I was about, hurrying away from the table, sobbing, and covering my face with my hands. I heard Giles say, "You stupid fellow!" to Valentine; I heard Mrs. Henry scold somebody else; and in a minute or two,

without knowing exactly how I got there, I found myself standing in the smoking-room, shivering, and declaring that I was determined not to faint—I could help it, I was sure, and I would.

“Never mind if you do, dear,” began Valentine; “we shall not think it at all silly of you.”

“Be quiet!” whispered Mr. Brandon: “that’s not the style of thing to say! Now, Miss Graham, sit by the window. Here is water. Hold it to her lips, Val. You wish to command yourself, of course?”

“Of course!” I repeated.

“And you are better already. See, here is your maid!”

I now first observed that I was entirely abandoned by the female part of the family, and this did a great deal to restore me; far more than Mrs. Brand did, though I was straightway left for her to do her best with me.

I could soon walk upstairs, and oblige myself to eat and drink. I had a sort of notion that it was humiliating to be hysterical, or, at least, a sign of weakness, in which the mind bore its part as well as the frame, so I struggled against my sensations with such vigour as I believe helped to keep them off.

“Ah!” said Mrs. Brand, when she came in with some jelly, “what tender-hearted ladies these are, to be sure! Miss Grant as near as possible went off into hysterics when you turned faint; and Miss Elizabeth,

when I asked if she would like to come and sit with you, was all of a tremble, and said she couldn't on any account."

I stayed in my room all that day, and performed what I found the rather difficult task of telling Mrs. Brand the contents of my uncle's letter.

Mrs. Brand was more philosophical over my troubles than she usually was over her own. "It was a disappointment, certainly; but, dear me, people had disappointments in this world, and must look to have them, ma'am."

At night, when I was going to bed, she remarked that she supposed I could spare her in a day or two. I said "Yes;" and being by this means brought to some practical thoughts, I found myself better during the evening. I had exhausted myself with crying over my lost home, and now, weary and sick at heart, I fell sound asleep, and woke in the morning quite well in health, and able to consider what I should do.

I have often thought that when some trial or disappointment is inevitable, settled, and not to be stirred by anything that those can do who have to bear it, one of the chief sources of its power is removed. It is what we think might possibly have *been* otherwise if we had *done* otherwise; what might now be possibly removed if we only knew how to remove it; what is doubtful as to results; what is complicated with uncertainties and calls for action on our part, while yet we

cannot decide what that action should be; what calls for discretion and demands vigilance, which can harass the mind and most effectually destroy its peace. None of these advantages beset my trouble, and the only circumstance which might have been altered if I had had time to plead for it, was that I might have been able to take leave of Tom and my uncle, which I now found they did not wish me to do, for my uncle had not mentioned to me what port he should touch at, to take Mrs. Brand on board; and when I questioned her, I found that she had received her own instructions, and knew in what direction to proceed, though I knew nothing. I was aware how much they both dreaded scenes, so I easily understood the motive for this reserve.

Mrs. Henfrey very kindly came into my room before I went down next morning. She kissed me, and said they knew that I had now to fix upon a home, and Mr. Mortimer hoped I would not think of leaving his house for at least a fortnight. Having now no wishes to consult but my own, I accepted the invitation, and felt glad to have that short time in which to settle my plans. It was something definite, too—far pleasanter than the most cordial proffers of hospitality with no fixed limit; and, as I went downstairs with her, I felt how good they had been to me, and how glad I was to stay a little longer.

After breakfast, Mrs. Brand showed me my uncle's

letter to her. As soon as I could spare her, she was to repair to Weymouth. The "Curlew" was lying in Portland Roads: she was to take a boat and come out to her. I found that she had already packed up her boxes, and found, also, that my uncle really did wish me not to appear with her, so I said she might go that very morning.

When it was time for her to start, I gave her a keepsake, and kissed her, charging her to write whenever she could. We both shed a few tears; and, when she was gone, I felt that now I was indeed utterly alone, and must begin to consider my plans in good earnest.

To this end I wrote to Mrs. Mompesson, told her that I now wished for a home, mentioned what I could give for it, and asked her whether she could recommend one. Without asking her to let me live in her house, I said enough to show that the simplest way of living would satisfy me, and I gave her a good opportunity to have me as a boarder, if she and her husband wished it; and as they were poor, I hoped they would wish it. The answer was from him, a long kind letter. Nothing would have pleased them so much as to have made a home for me themselves; but they had no spare room, for the house was filled with their children and pupils. That was the only house I could have made a home of, for I loved its master, and knew that I could love his wife and children. It was

for his sake that I had wished to live in the country, and my thoughts, on reading his letter, took an entirely new direction. I knew I could go to Miss Tott, if I chose; but I did not like the notion, and I did not know, with 180*l.* a year, whether I was rich or poor.

I talked to Mrs. Henfrey on the subject; but I found her information to the last degree vague and unsatisfactory. I talked to Liz; but she evidently knew nothing, for she spoke of keeping a pony and a boy, which I thought must be out of the question. Lou, of course, was absorbed in other matters.

So I tried Valentine, taking care to choose a time when Giles was present, for I had formed a tolerably distinct plan, and I wished to see in what light he would regard it, and whether he would think it preposterous. I had to wait some days, for Giles very seldom was present; at last I found a good time, and, beginning to talk with Valentine, he fell into the little trap I had laid for him.

“What would you do, Giles,” asked Valentine, “if you had 180*l.* a year, and were a young lady?”

“That would depend on whether I cared most for domestic pleasures, or for amusements, intellectual or otherwise.”

“But, supposing domestic pleasures out of the question, as I think they are if one lives among per-

fect strangers, don't you consider the first thing to decide on would be whether you were rich or poor?"

"No, for that would be according to the life chosen. If you chose to do without a maid, and board with a quiet family, in the country—say, a clergyman's—you might be rich, for you could easily be boarded for 90*l.* a year, and thus 90*l.* would remain for personal expenses."

"And I should be miserable! Perhaps I should not like the people; and, assuredly, I should not have half enough to do. I want to have lessons, and get a reading-ticket for some good library, and visit the poor, and see pictures, and hear lectures."

"Then you must live in London, and be extremely poor."

"Why so poor?"

"Because you must have a maid. No young lady can go about London, and attend libraries and lectures, and visit the poor, alone."

"I know it would be very unfashionable to walk about alone."

"It would not be *right*; you could not do it—that is to say, I believe your uncle would not approve."

"Then, what will a maid cost?"

"You could not be boarded in a quiet, private family, in the most unfashionable neighbourhood, with your maid, under 100*l.* a year, at the very least. Then, if your maid's wages were 25*l.*, that would only leave

you 55*l.* a year for all your personal expenses, including dress, cabs, charity, travelling expenses, tickets for the coveted lectures, and money for the desired lessons—books, doctor's bill, if you should have one."

"I think that sounds something like happiness and hard work."

"Indeed! I thought it would sound like borrowing and sorrowing."

"Of course, I am aware that I know very little of life and of money."

"Very little, indeed," he answered, in a tone of pity.

"So, as I have absolutely no one at all to ask advice of, excepting you, I will tell you what my plan is; and if you are *sure* it cannot be carried out—if you *know* it cannot—why, then, perhaps I had better reconsider it."

"I am all attention."

"Then, there are three things that I wish to learn—wood-engraving, dress-making, and cooking."

Mr. Brandon's face expressed the utmost astonishment; but he said not a word.

"You have decided that I am to be very poor. In case I had been rich, I should have acted differently; but, if I proved to be poor, my plan was to *teach*, in order to earn money to learn. I must find a family

of little boys, to whom I can teach Latin and Greek, for an hour or two every day. My maid will walk with me to the house—”

“Extraordinary!” interrupted Valentine.

“With the money I earn so, I can learn wood-engraving and dress-making. When I know enough of wood-engraving to practise it, and earn money by it also, I shall spend that in learning to cook—”

“Amazing!” said Valentine, changing his word.

“I shall then begin to lead a happy life; I shall have as much to do as I can do; and, being by that time a proficient in wood-cutting, I shall have a class of respectable girls, to whom I shall teach the art, and so make them independent—”

“Astounding!” cried Valentine, changing his word again.

Mr. Brandon stood stock-still, and said nothing.

“My maid will make my dress; for my reading, I shall go to the British Museum. Perhaps, in order to save money for concerts and lectures, I shall translate some French books, and I may, perhaps, write books for children. By that time I shall leave off taking lessons in wood-cutting altogether, and, still teaching my little boys, I shall have plenty of money to spend in laying in a stock of eatables; and I shall go to some industrial school, and offer to be *honorary cook* there, and teach the girls to make all sorts of nice stews and puddings, and soups and pies. I shall

provide the materials; and, at first, I shall give away the dishes. I shall let the girls carry them home to their mothers; then the mothers and other poor women will come to learn. I shall charge a penny a lesson, and hire a kitchen, to concoct and cook the things in; and I shall give prizes of pies to those who learn fastest."

"Frantic!" exclaimed Valentine.

I had observed, for some moments past, that Mr. Brandon had difficulty in restraining a smile, which first showed itself in the corners of his mouth, and when he chased it thence, peeped out at his eyes. He, however, did not say anything disrespectful concerning my plans; but, when I ceased to speak, remarked that he was afraid—he hoped he might be mistaken—but he was afraid I was too sanguine.

Then, if I am, and if I do no good, and derive no pleasure from all these things, only think what a desirable person I shall be for papa; if, when he grows older, he should send for me to go out to California."

"Ca-li-for-nia!" said Valentine, with unfeigned contempt.

"Yes, I am almost sure it will end in my going out to California."

"And I am *quite* sure, D. dear," replied Valentine, with extreme suavity, "that it will not end in your going out to California."

"Indeed!"

“For I, being your most intimate friend, and, as I may say, your most honoured adviser, you would naturally write to me first, and say, ‘My valued compatriot, if I go out to this hole of a California, and dislike it, will you come and fetch me home again?’ I should reply, ‘No, I won’t.’ Consequently——”

“Consequently, she would get some other swain to do her that service!” interrupted Mr. Brandon.

“Consequently,” I added, “I should go, determined to be pleased, and never to come home any more.”

“Consequently!” burst in Valentine, after this double interruption, “she would think better of it, and remain at home; if she didn’t——” here he paused, and shook his head in a menacing fashion.

“Be calm, my dear boy,” said Giles, bantering him, “this peril seems imminent, but is not to be warded off by threats or warnings. The *Smilex simulata* is not a plant, as I have heard, that flourishes in those diggings—all ladies are ‘*remarkably eligible*’ there.”

Seeing me look surprised, he added, “Those wall-flowers, you perceive, grow in my garden now. I think it just as well you should know that anything you say to Valentine is sure to be in my possession the very next morning, by seven o’clock at the latest.”

CHAPTER XI.

"In brief since I do purpose to marry I will think nothing to any purpose that the world can say against it."—*Much Ado about Nothing*.

IN a week I was to leave the hospitable house where I had been entertained so long. In a week I was to begin life for myself, and as yet I had arranged nothing but this, that I was to go to Miss Tott for a fortnight, and stay longer if I chose. Valentine, always affectionate, always pleased to be with me, became more so as the time went on; there was a kind of brother and sister intimacy between us, which was partly the result of our being so much thrown together, and partly the result of his natural openness of temper and love of companionship.

"I say," he observed, as on the first day of this week we were sitting together, mounting our photographs, "if you want a maid why don't you talk to Anne Molton—the workwoman, you know, who comes and makes things for Liz and Lou, and who mended your tarlatan dress when we tore it in the garden?"

"What makes you think she would suit?"

"Oh, Giles put it into my head. If she were your maid, as he remarked to me, you could learn dress-making of her for nothing; and as you like Miss

Dorinda so much, you would like Anne, for she is just like her."

"But would she like me and the sort of life she would lead with me?"

"You can ask her if you like; she is here now. I believe she would like, for she wants to leave this neighbourhood."

I went straight up-stairs to speak to this woman, the inducement to try and secure her being that she was like Miss Dorinda—like her, as I hoped, in her chief characteristic, her contented piety and deep, and yet calm reverence of heart.

She was seated at work in a spare bed-room, and I came in and sat down, telling her to give me a seam to run: as I worked I began to talk to her, and gradually unfolded my plan—my self-sufficient, benevolent, ignorant plan. She listened at first with surprise, then with some excitement of manner, her plain, pale features grew intelligent, her great thin awkward figure stooped towards me attentively. I told her a little of my history, and her hands began to tremble over her needle and thread.

Happening to pause for a moment, I was surprised to find that, without looking at me, she wished in her turn to be the speaker; she first spoke of her deficiencies: "She was not very quick with her dress-making—she did not always manage to make such good fits as she could wish—but her desire was to

work, 'Not with eye service, as pleasing men, but as to the Lord.' " I saw she had perceived my drift, and let her go on: "She wished to leave the neighbourhood, for she could hardly earn enough with her needle to keep her; she did not wish to be a nurse, for she had never been used to children; she had often prayed to the Lord to let her be of some use, for she did not feel that it was much use to be just earning bread enough for one's own mouth. She thought if she could be maid to a lady—such a one as gave up her time to good works—she might be a help to her in many ways. Miss Braithwaite had advised her to try for such a situation; but of all places in the world she should like to go to London, there was such a wilderness of folks there, and so few to do anything for them." I saw that the plan had commended itself to her, and that she would follow my fortunes if I would let her. I asked what wages she would expect, and she said:

"Oh, ma'am, I will take whatever you can afford."

I did not in the least expect to fail, therefore I never warned her that she might find the life she was choosing very different from that my excited fancy had pictured,—on the contrary, warming with her excitement and kindling with her enthusiasm, I went from one scheme to another, till when I at last said, "Do you think you should like such a life?" she

replied, "Yes, ma'am; I have always thought it would be a blessed thing to have anything to do for HIM."

But quiet as her voice was, almost blissful in its serene hopefulness, I saw at once that the love which had prompted those words was something I had never attained to, the gratitude was far more real, the motives were more pure.

As for me, the craving desire for action had been one reason why I had made these benevolent plans. I wanted this kindness bestowed, to stand me, if it would, in the stead of kindness no longer received; I wanted that others should depend on me, and so appease my heart for the loss of my brother and my home; I wanted soon to be able to forget this very visit; I had certainly not made any friend by it, and I began to perceive very plainly that I had lost one. What a happy thing it was for me that I secured Anne Molton! what would have become of me and my plans but for her good sense and good principles!

When I had secured her services, I went down again, but found no one in the drawing-room, excepting Mr. Mortimer, and he, though polite, was generally so distant to me now, that I was glad to withdraw and go down into the garden, where I found the family.

Giles and Valentine were busy converting an arbour into a dark chamber, by means of oil-cloth and boards, but when the latter saw me, he left his brother

to finish the work and made off to my retreat, which was a low seat under the shadow of some laurels.

Giles, with his coat off, continued to hammer away at the chamber; Valentine took a knife and began to cut a little frame for one of the photographs.

"I say, D.," he observed quietly, and as if there was nothing particular in the remark; "I say, D., what fun it would be if you and I were engaged!"

"I wish you would not talk such nonsense; I do not approve of it, and it does not amuse me at all."

"I did not mean it should. I meant it quite seriously. You are nearly twenty, I am now in my twentieth year; why shouldn't we be engaged if we please?"

"If we please, certainly, but one of us does not please."

"You don't know how you should like it till you try! Suppose now we agree to be engaged for six months, and see how we like it? You won't? Well, say a week then?"

"No; I would not for an hour."

"Why not?"

"Because I do not particularly care for you; because you do not particularly care for me; and because I have no particular wish to make Prentice miserable!"

"Prentice," he burst out, "has nothing to do with this! it's entirely a case of *spontaneous combustion* on

my part. He did nothing to fan the flame. I shall be so horridly dull when you are gone, I shall not know what to do. Come, I will make you another proposition; I will be engaged to you, but you shall be free."

"That is impossible! An engagement must be a mutual thing."

"It need not be that I see. Well, D., as you are so obliging as to permit it—indeed I do not see how you can help it—I hereby record my intention, and my circumstances. I shall have a thousand pounds when Giles has given it to me; and shortly after I am of age, if he will but let me go to Cambridge, I shall have a Bachelor's degree. Such are my prospects; I lay them at your feet; I am an engaged man."

"What frantic nonsense!"

"And you are quite free. Now, don't look so furious—don't, or Giles will see it! I shall hang four-and-twenty of the best of the portraits of you round my room, and I shall wear one in each waistcoat pocket. I shall kiss your Greek lexicon every day, and heave up two sighs over the happy past. Dear me, how pleasant it is to be engaged! We shall correspond, of course? What do you think Giles said to me, this morning? why that I did not treat the girls who visit us with sufficient respect. That my manner was too jocose and too careless."

"Did he mention me in particular?"

"Yes, among others. Our beloved Giles has some queer notions as to the deference which is due to ladies, and inseparable from true regard. He says I am rude sometimes, and also exacting."

"I quite agree with him."

"So I told him. I remarked that you had several times made the same observation yourself."

"And what was his reply?"

"Oh, a great deal that was not at all to the purpose; but as I did nothing but laugh, he became furious and we had a short quarrel, after which——"

"After which you made it up, and shook hands?" I suggested, for I wanted him to tell me some more.

"Shook hands!" he repeated with scorn. "There was no occasion for that; in real life men don't quarrel and make it up as they do in books. *Scene for the Novel*:—"O brother of my heart!" he exclaimed, "guide of my tender infancy, let not cold disdain or irritating chaff part true spirits." Then he flung himself on the manly breast of his brother, who strained him to his heart; they wept, and the latter imprinted a fraternal kiss on his ample brow.' Let me see how many years it is since I kissed Giles. Not since he went to New Zealand I think, and I wouldn't have done it then *on any account* if there had been anybody to look on. No, we didn't shake hands, but we are all right again."

It was the day before I was to go to London. Some

of my boxes were packed, and Anne Molton was sitting in my room occupied with needlework. Valentine and I were about to read our Greek together, when Mr. Mortimer came into the drawing-room, and saying that he hoped I would excuse his interrupting us, began to unfold to Valentine a plan by which I perceived that he would be absent for that day and night, and would not return till an hour or so before the time of my departure. Mr. Mortimer had a letter in his hand. I thought it could just as easily have gone by post, but he seemed determined that it should go to his friend across the country by hand, and that hand Valentine's.

Valentine looked a little sulky and also a little sheepish. A suspicion certainly did cross my mind to the effect that this was done because Mr. Mortimer thought his son took rather too much interest in me, and wished to detach him from my side; but if he did think this it was rather too late to act, when I was so near the time of departure.

Valentine went his way. I was left with Mrs. Henfrey till luncheon time, and after that meal, as Lou and Captain Walker went out for a drive, and visitors arrived who had to be entertained, I found myself alone, and put on my bonnet, resolving to go and take leave of Miss Braithwaite.

I had never been there alone before, but the way was pleasant, there being nothing between the grounds of the two houses but some fields. Miss Dorinda

Braithwaite had exercised more influence over me than I was aware of at the time, and I wanted to consult her about some of my plans. She was very kind that day, and as I sat by her she drew me on to talk to her. Her words at first were a comment on that text, "If ye know those things, happy are ye if ye do them." But that subject can be discussed by many people, and does not involve much that is confidential or difficult to unfold. Another succeeded; and to my own surprise I found myself telling her how I had sat on Mr. Mompesson's knee in the roof of the Minster, and he had told me for the first time the wonderful story of the world's redemption.

I sat with Miss Braithwaite some time, and came away much the better for her advice and cheerful conversation. I walked briskly, till I came to the little wood which skirted Mr. Mortimer's grounds, and there sat down to enjoy its beauty, and to think.

I had come to the same place where we had sat and talked before when the trees were bare; they were covered with leaves now, and the ground was carpeted with woodruffe.

I leaned my cheek upon my hand, many thoughts passed through my mind, my eyes were fixed on the little tinkling dancing brook that flowed past my feet, and I remember indulging a vague wonder as to where it was going, and where I was going. London was the

name of the place where I was going. I began to feel that I knew little else respecting it, and scarcely anything of the life that I should lead there.

I looked up on hearing a slight noise, and saw Mr. Brandon approaching me; but I did not move, and as he stepped over the brook, he said, "I supposed I should find you here."

He sat down and remained some moments perfectly silent; at last he said, in a tone almost as dreamy as my own thoughts, "What have you been thinking of this afternoon, as you sat here all alone?"

I answered, "The wood is full of spirits; you said it would be some day. My thoughts were about *them*."

He was again silent. The wood-doves were cooing, and the flickering sunshine played on the ground; but I was in no humour to speak first. I had nothing to say. When he did speak, it was in a perfectly different tone, cheerful and matter-of-fact.

"I believe you have chosen a very busy life for yourself; consequently if you have any vague fears that time may change into certainties——"

Absolute silence again. He made no attempt whatever to conclude his sentence, and did not look at me, but beyond, upon the slope covered with blue flowers.

I also looked straight before me, and began to feel a strange agitation; his having come to find me was unusual, and I wondered what he had to say.

Still propping my chin on my hand I listened to the cooing of the doves, and felt the sweet air and sunshine.

His last words were, "I dare say you think it singular—singular that I should come out here to disturb your reverie. I have not done so willingly; nothing but a desire to prevent future mistakes, and perhaps future troubles, could have induced me to take upon myself this task."

As he stopped I involuntarily said, "What task, Mr. Brandon?"

"I myself," he went on, heedless of my interruption, "have suffered much from a trouble which—which I do not say will ever be yours. I do not say that you are laying the foundations for it deep and strong; I do not even say that there is any such tenacity in your memory, or strength in your heart, as may be likely to make such a trouble long and burdensome; but——"

What could he mean? he spoke with deliberate steadiness, like a man who has made up his mind to a certain task, but does not like it; and here he paused as if expecting me to reply, but I had nothing to say. All sorts of vague fears floated through my mind as to what might be his meaning, but I did not utter one of them, and when the silence grew oppressive I broke it by making some remark about the beauty of the wood.

If he heard he took no notice; his face, though

naturally without any ruddy hues, was capable of a sudden flush for a moment. I saw this dawn and wane again as he went on in an embarrassed manner—"But when I reflect that your acquaintance with me has been the cause of your coming here, and of what I perceive to have followed, and when I call to mind how few friends you have—perhaps no advisers—and how little you can know of life or of yourself, I feel that I owe you some duty, though it is a difficult one for me to perform, for after all there is some risk. It is possible that I may be mistaken, but you have alluded to my words, that there are spirits in the wood. Well, if I am going to offend, perhaps to wound you, that allusion reminds me how best to do what I have to do. It will give me my share of the pain. I shall not inflict more than I shall endure."

Every time he spoke he began almost cheerfully and quite steadily, but he faltered as he went on, and ended with evident agitation. I could still find no answer, but when he paused was curiously conscious of the cooing of the doves, the babbling of the brook, and the flicker of sunbeams dropping through gaps in the foliage, and wandering over my gown and my hands.

Whether he was waiting till I should ask him to explain himself, or only till he could decide what to say, I did not know, but now a silence followed, which was long enough for a world of thought, and wonder, and perturbation. He had said that he himself had

suffered much, and that he wished to prevent future mistakes, and the same kind of suffering on my part. He had hinted before of his love for that lady who had held his flowers so carelessly. The nature of his past trouble was therefore evident, but why had he taken it for a text on which to preach warnings to me?

Tom had often told me that my manners were too humble, too gentle and conciliatory. "When you say anything that you fancy may displease, you always entreat forgiveness with your eyes," he had once said to me. I had stayed a long time at Wigfield. I had been in his way. Had I entreated forgiveness of St. George?—even if I had, what could he mean by this? He was approaching some subject vaguely, his words were ambiguous. They sharpened my senses, they were even a terror to me, because he himself was so embarrassed and so out of countenance. Could I believe that he was not satisfied with having left me, with having scarcely spoken to me since his return? Was it possible that any man in his senses could think it needful to give me yet stronger hints than these? And if he did?

As a planet struck suddenly by some resistless force, and made to whirl on with a wilder motion, so that the great clock of her time would take to beating faster, finding it hard to keep count, while she devoured the awful miles of her oval, I seemed to be suddenly sent on to rush over a great piece of my life in a mo-

ment, to be thinking faster and seeing deeper, seizing on things as they whirled by, and understanding what they meant, and what they were.

First, I thought, could he mean to warn me about Valentine? No, I constantly sparred with Valentine and frequently snubbed him; he was fond of me, sociable and easy, but a world of boyish impertinence mingled with his compliments; even these were almost always jokes, and that St. George knew quite well. I was obliged to dismiss that possibility; then I thought of all I most loved—that brother who had always been dearer to me than anything that breathed. He was so still. I felt that if I could get back to him and the old man who had indulged me, and loved to see me happy, I would thankfully, though not without a pang, have turned my face from this St. George for ever. I did not care for him and love him then? Yes, very much; I knew in a moment that he stood next to these. Considering that he had made it hard for me to understand him, and that his great reserve excluded me from the springs of his higher life, I think it was strange I did not love him wholly, for these things kept me often thinking about him, but then I could not now altogether approve of him, and his conduct in taking Tom away had cost me my home. Yet, as he was still silent, I felt there must be something coming that I should intensely dislike to hear. If it was a reproof, what could it be about? Since he

had taken Tom from me, I had felt painfully humble. I belonged to no one, none wanted me. I could not stand against this, I felt compelled to lower my self-esteem to the level of other people's estimate, and I would not speak lest I should draw him on, or help him on. But now supposing he did mean, if he could, to touch on my feelings towards himself, what could I do? I had only that minute found out how dear he was to me; could I possibly make up my mind to answer, to excuse myself, to explain? Certainly not, I would rather let him think what he pleased. But in a few minutes I gathered courage, and better sense (as I then thought) came to my aid, and I brought myself to believe that whatever he wanted to say, it could not possibly concern my feelings towards himself. What object could he have in doing so, unless he thought I loved him? and if he did, surely he was the last man to commit such an intolerable blunder as to dare to lecture me about it. He was sensitive—more than that he was manly, and in the truest sense of the word he was a gentleman.

Thinking on this during the long silence, my heart began to beat more calmly, and the painful flush on forehead and cheek subsided.

He had sat by me so absolutely silent and motionless that at last I was impelled to turn my head and look at him; he also looked ill at ease, and very much embarrassed, but when he met my eyes he resumed

his steady, his almost cheerful manner, and as if he had been waiting till I could rouse myself, he said, immediately—

“Have you been to Wigfield?”

“Yes.”

“When that tree was younger—that plane-tree which grows on the opposite side of the slope was ten years younger, the roof and some of the windows of Wigfield Grange were visible above its boughs, and almost every day I used to come to this spot to look at them. Did Miss Dorinda ever mention her sister to you?”

“The sister who died? Yes.”

“The sister who died. I think I see her now, and scorn myself and my folly. I was a youth of nineteen, and she, a dark tall woman, past her early bloom, but splendid in her mature beauty. She was thirteen years my senior. She was haughty, decided, and full of womanly dignity. She used often to come to this slope and sit here reading with her poor crippled sister. From a child I had been accustomed to read and sing with her. She was fond of me; she used to chide me if I did not come. Sometimes, being but a boy, I was blunt and rude. She said she must teach me how to behave to her sex. She did teach me, and when I was little more than nineteen I had fallen in love with her.

“Anything else as unsuitable could hardly have been found if I had gone far and wide in search of it. She did not find out my infatuation. Dorinda did, and implored me to keep away. She said she knew this passion had not taken deep root, and begged me not to darken my youth with the shadow of such a deplorable mistake—those were her words—I often thought of them afterwards.”

“Do not go on, Mr. Brandon; why should you? It distresses you.”

“Why should I?—I must—I had loved her for love’s sake only. I was so much younger than she that marriage with her hardly occurred to me. I was contented with my present. To be with her, and hear her speak was bliss enough. One day, as I sat here dreaming of her, she approached, and I was so amazed at her beauty and her superb air of careless sovereignty, that I remained dumb and motionless, gazing at her, till stopping close to me she looked down into my eyes that fell beneath hers, and laughed. ‘You ridiculous boy!’ she exclaimed, ‘you are actually blushing; how dare you?’”

I turned my head and stole a glance at his face; it was reddened as if the shame of that moment was still rankling in his heart; his eyes flashed and he went on:

“I stammered out some excuse, in which her beauty

bore a part. 'My beauty!' she replied. 'My beauty, indeed! Let me hear no more of this; the beauty that was born for you is now probably sobbing and crying over her French verbs, or daubing her cheeks with bread and treacle in the nursery.' She laughed again, but painfully, and then she said a great deal more that was scornful and almost insulting. But that could not stop me; on the contrary, when she began to shed tears of vexation and excitement, I was goaded on to make full confession of my love, to plead with her to think favourably of it, and to confess that I had cherished it for months. 'There,' she said, with a sigh of impatience, 'that is enough, get up. You indeed! Why I have kissed you dozens of times when you were a chubby little child. I had rejected the only man I ever cared for before you were seven years old. You! Go away, and learn to forget your folly.' That was during the long vacation. I did go away, and when I returned to Trinity I studied hard, but I did not forget her; when I had taken my degree I travelled, but still I did not forget her.

"When I was in my twenty-fourth year, coming home after a tour, I was told that she was ill. My secret had been well kept by the two sisters, and by myself, at their desire. My first glance at her showed a change quite indescribable, but quite decisive. They moved her to Dawlish, and forgetting her scorn now, and only desiring to be soothed by the attentive tender-

ness of a love like mine, she asked me to follow her there, and I did."

"Stop, Mr. Brandon! why say any more?"

"There is not much more to say. She had been a very careless, indifferent person, very thoughtless for time, very reckless as regarded eternity, but during those miserable days and weeks,—miserable to her, for life was to be taken leave of, and to me because she was so dear to me,—Dorinda was like a good angel to us both. She told us the old story which we both knew so well, but which we had not comprehended or received; she unfolded to me the compensation of the Divine love, and calmed her with the tidings of peace and immortality."

"Don't tell me any more!—don't tell me any more!"

"Why not?"

I did not know, but his voice so full of pathos and broken with short quick sighs, went straight to my heart. I had never felt how dear he was to me, so plainly as I felt it then; and for the moment I thought that to have been the object of such a love on his part, and to have known it, I would willingly have laid down my head and died like that beautiful lady.

He went on and told me of her death, and how she had kissed him before she died, and thanked him

for all his kindness to her; and then there was a silence, during which I trembled and wept, yet not without a certain sense of relief, that the recital which had troubled him and me so much was over. But why had it been told to me? Why had he been so resolutely bent on my knowing all about this his first love? This was obviously a prelude to something else, and yet that something was to offend me.

Yes, and it did offend me. It came after another pause.

"And all this is past. I was determined to tell it you; I have forced myself to do it, *in order that I might declare that it has past away*. I look back and acknowledge to myself that the rending away of that hope was far better for my happiness even here, than its fulfilment could have been. I thank my God, notwithstanding, that I went through that affliction; it has enabled me to sympathize with trouble; it has made me stronger to endure what may yet be in store for me, and braver to take all comfort that may be left.

"To waste his best affection on the dead, and by perverse and cherished constancy to carry on a first mistake, to shut his heart against the blessings of a wife and a home, was not meant to be the lot of man. It is not the doom of man, if he will rise and do battle with it; no, nor the doom of woman either."

Silence once more, silence in my heart, which wondered at him, and could not repeat to itself, but

could only feel the chill of those words, "nor woman either."

The old alarm came back again stronger and more distinct than ever; now I saw, because I was forced to see it, that he had told me this story in order not only that I might apply it to myself, but that I might understand that I had to overlive my regard, because it was not reciprocal. But I was determined to make no answer; there was still, I thought, a chance that I might be mistaken. I should like to have risen and gone away then, but my limbs trembled, and more than that, I was arrested by a fresh surprise.

"Oh," he exclaimed, bringing his hand down heavily on a tree-stump beside him—"Oh, I never felt so like a sneak in my life!" and then almost directly he added, with the greatest gentleness—"If one person can get over such an attachment another can."

I answered "Yes." He had the mastery so completely then, that I could no longer, even in my mind, dispute his conviction,—but with the desperation of wounded self-respect, I clung to the hope that he would spare a woman's reserve from anything further; but no—he actually went on to say, "It would be affectation to pretend that I do not read your feelings; you can hardly expect that I should not read what is so plain—I, at least, whoever else is blind."

His voice became softer and more agitated, and as for me, my sensations were indescribable.

“It was a most unexpected revelation to me, I do most solemnly assure you, or I would not have let it go so far; but I do not want to excuse myself. I will think only of you: whatever you may think of me, and whatever I may think of myself at this moment, I am sure that I am right to speak, and tell you that your love is not returned. I am going away so soon—going to leave this country—that I am certain it is best to speak.”

Shame choked me, but even at that pass I am sure I was as much shocked for him as for myself. Oh, why had I not found strength and courage to stop him? He was degrading and tearing himself down from the high place he had held in my fancy—in my heart; was not this to be a consummate, to be an odious, to be an intolerable prig? No, I supposed it could not be, because such a pang of pity and wounded affection made my heart bleed, that though the picture I had drawn of him in my thoughts was quite torn to pieces, I did not despise him even then.

Telling me to my face that I loved him, and must try to overcome my love! Every atom of womanly pride that I had in me was roused to revolt against him, but my heart struck against my side. The words were burning in me that longed to demand silence of

him, but my tongue had so absolutely lost the art of utterance, that I sat beside him yearning to stop him, and almost frantic because I could not, while he went on to tell me that if love had been given and only affectionate friendship returned, the sooner this was known the better. He made a movement then as if he would have taken my hand, but this was more than I could bear, and I recovered strength to push his away, and turn aside my head. Very few men, I should think, have made such a mistake as this. Surely it must have been the greatest he ever made. He did not appear to resent my pushing away his hand, but he actually went on to say—

“I ought to have said all this before. I take shame to myself; but I did not know how great was the mischief that had been done. I did not suppose there was any danger in those trifling attentions, which now—which I now see to have been so wrong.”

His regretful avowal of the mischief that he believed he had so unconsciously done—done with no effort worth mentioning—called from me some expression of the torture to which he was subjecting me; and all of a sudden he appeared to become aware of, and to be shocked at, the effect he was producing; and, taking me up in his arms, as carefully and apparently with as little effort as if I had been a child, he carried me down the slope to the little stream, and dipping his handkerchief in the water, wrung it out,

and damped my forehead with it; then took up my hands and bathed them one after the other, by dipping his own into the water, and drawing mine through them.

A choking sensation, that could find neither words nor tears, almost overpowered me.

“Are you better now?” he asked.

My soul naturally enough revolted against his sympathy. His face was very near mine, leaning over me with anxious solicitude; and I recovered strength to put out my hand, and with what little vigour I had to push it away. In doing so, the restraint that, like a girdle seemed to tie down my heart, gave way; and my pent-up feelings relieved themselves by a flow of passionate tears.

There was no need to consider what he might think or feel. He had treated me with no real mercy, with no respect; and if he had been ever so wrong in all his surmises, I felt that I should hardly have cared to tell him so.

I heard him mutter to himself that he was a fool, that he hated himself, that he had done ten times more harm than good. I assented to it all in my inmost heart; but I felt that the smart even of that moment was all the sharper because I was so ashamed of his wonderful blindness—his unmanly blindness—to what was due either to himself or to me.

But the more passionate the tears, and the keener

the pang that causes them, the sooner they are dashed away. I soon recovered myself sufficiently to see that my tears had thoroughly frightened and subdued him. His forehead was crimsoned with self-reproach and embarrassment, and when I looked at him he could not meet my eyes, but asked, with evident anxiety, whether I felt able to walk, and whether I would take his arm.

I said no; but that, if he would go on, I would shortly return alone.

Upon this he answered, with a sort of restless impatience, that he could not do that; I was not well enough to be left, and surely I did not mean to allow him no time to explain himself. He wished to assure me that he was aware he might possibly have been mistaken; and he hoped I would forgive him.

"I will forgive you," I managed to say, "if you will only be silent. I will not—I cannot—endure another word."

"You treat me," he replied, regardless of the condition, "as if I had presumed to accuse you of some great folly, or even of some grave fault."

"If you had," I replied, "no talking now could ever set it right. Do you think I am going to argue with you about this? No; you must think what you please; but, also, I shall think what I please."

"But," he still persisted, "I must be heard—I will be heard."

"Mr. Brandon, I will not hear another word of that, or of anything concerning it."

I was able to rise then, and begin to hurry away from him towards the house; but he easily kept beside me. And presently he said,—

"If I am not to talk of that, let me say something different."

As I made no objection, he added,—

"I may have no other opportunity for years. I want you to try, in spite of your present feelings, whether you cannot look upon me as your friend, and to believe that if you should ever want a friend, and I had no other desire to prove myself one than that I might in some sort atone for the pain I have given you to-day, it would be sufficient to make me urgently long for the opportunity or the chance of doing so. Will you give me such a chance? Do you hear me?"

"Yes."

"Will you promise to think of me as your friend, and apply to me if I can be of use to you? Indeed, I have more power, far more power, than you suppose."

Yes; I knew he had Tom in his power; I knew of the struggle, and his victory; but apply to him!!

He looked at me for an answer, but I could not promise, for I knew that there were few emergencies under which it would not be more bitter to sue to him than to endure to the utmost. "You do not

know," he said, deeply hurt, "the pain you are inflicting."

"I know you to be a very benevolent person," I answered; "I am quite aware that you like to be of service to people."

He made some gesture of momentary passion and irritation, but he struggled with it, smoothed his brow, and said: "Therefore you will promise?"

"I promise not to forget what you have said," I replied.

"And nothing more?" he exclaimed.

I could not reply, and after a long pause, he said, in the tone of one who felt himself injured,

"Well, then, nothing is left me but to hope that you may not want a friend."

Not another word passed between us; we walked on to the house and parted at the door.

I went to my room, walked to the looking-glass, and found that my face was disfigured with crying; it wanted two hours to dinner-time, so as I knew that I was not likely to be inquired for, I drew the curtains and lay down on the couch, bent upon hiding my emotion and letting the traces of it have time to disappear. I could not endure the thought of being questioned as to my paleness; more than ever I wished to keep a cheerful face that evening.

It surprises me now to think how womanly pride triumphed over all other feelings; for the sake of re-

covering my self-command, I contrived to smother the cruel pain that came whenever I thought of Mr. Brandon's behaviour to me, and I drove away all thoughts of self-pity with the powerful motive of keeping myself from further tears.

Such being the case, it was not wonderful that I could walk down to dinner with no trace of my passion of tears, beyond a little flush, which made Mrs. Henfrey say that I had tanned myself by sitting in the sun.

"Where's Brandon?" asked Captain Walker.

"Why he's gone somewhere on business," she replied, in her quiet, slow tone; "set off in such a hurry. But that's always his way; he can do twice as much in the time as other people."

"That's an excuse," I thought to myself, "to account for absenting himself the last evening;" but I was very glad of his absence, and more glad still when, after dinner, Mr. Tikey appeared, and with him the celebrated Prentice. With their aid we passed the evening very well; Mr. Tikey talked to Mr. Mortimer; Prentice made himself ridiculous in attempts to flirt with Liz; and Mrs. Henfrey spent the time in giving me a vast deal of good advice of a vague, unpractical sort, which I listened to at intervals.

The two brothers did not return that night. Neither had returned the next morning when I came down to breakfast, and I earnestly hoped they would not be in

time to meet me, for I felt that, if they were together, I would far rather see neither than be obliged to see both.

Rather earlier than there was any need for, the carriage came to the door, and I took leave of Mr. Mortimer, Lou, and her Captain, and drove to the station with Mrs. Henfrey and Liz, and Anne Molton. Alas! I had no sooner stepped on to the platform, than I saw Valentine and Mr. Brandon meeting us from the other side of the line.

Valentine came up to me with flushed cheeks and a sort of tender excitement in his eyes, which was quite a new expression for him. "I declare," he said, "I thought I should have been too late;" and as he stood looking at me, I said to him, smiling, "Well, you seem very glad to see me on the point of departure, you recreant knight!"

He made me no answer, but held out his hand; and when I took it, he led me to one of the carriages. "This is going to London," he said; "get into it, D. dear!" Then he added, with boyish frankness, "I really had no idea at all how fond I was of you, till I was parted from you. I say, D., do get in; if you don't, St. George will be coming to join us, perhaps."

A strong reason, indeed, to induce me to enter it; and we had no sooner sat down, than he began to tell me how afraid he had been that he should not be in time to see me. He had said that already, and he

next began to describe the dinner-party he had been at the night before, at his father's old friend's; how Giles had come in, and they had both gone together to sleep at John Mortimer's; and Giles, in spite of his impatience, had stayed on, arguing that morning with John Mortimer, till he (Valentine) was sure they should miss the train. Then he paused, and I, with my mind full of other things, looked up at him, whereupon the boyish manner gave way to something more earnest, the cracked voice became rather tremulous, and the handsome young face flushed a beautiful red.

"D. dear," he said, "I've often asked you to be engaged to me, haven't I now?"

"Yes, of course you have."

"Quite seriously?"

"I don't know about that," I answered, and laughed.

"Well, perhaps it was partly for fun at first; but it is not now, D. dear. I do assure you I should wish it if such a fellow as Prentice had never been born. So now I ask you, once for all, really and truly, and not in joke; and you won't refuse, will you? because that would be so—so ridiculous."

"So what?" I exclaimed.

"Oh, bother," he replied, "I don't know how to do this sort of thing at all (hang Prentice, how did he manage it?)—I love you, though, just as much as if I did."

"I will not be engaged to you, I replied; "really and truly, and not in joke, I will not; but I should like that we should be very great friends, for I care for you, and I even love you, almost as if you were a relation of mine."

"I suppose you won't," he observed, "because you think I shall soon forget you. I shan't, though, I can tell you."

"No, don't; I should be sorry if you did. I shall never forget you, Valentine—never; and you cannot think how few people I have in the world to care for now."

"But we shall correspond then?"

"Oh yes, write often; and so will I."

"Very well; but, D. dear, there really is no mistake about your deciding you won't be engaged?"

"Certainly not; don't I always tell you I won't?"

"You know that *I* am engaged to *you*."

"I know you say you are, and I give you leave to break off that engagement as soon as you please. There is Liz—ask her to come and sit with us; I want to take leave of her."

Instead of that he put his head out, asked her to go and fetch Mrs. Henfrey, and, as soon as she was gone, said, if I loved him as much as I had said, I ought to give him a kiss.

I replied, that if he would *break off* his supposed engagement to me then and there, I would; and, with

a good deal of laughter, he consented, and bent his fresh, boyish face towards me; whereupon I gave him a kiss, and felt no more inclined to blush on the occasion than if it had been Tom.

"There," he said, as he lifted up his head, "I've broken off the engagement—I've not only been engaged, but broken it off. Prentice shall know that before he is a day older! I've outdone him at last."

"Oh, Valentine!" I exclaimed, "how can you be so ridiculous?" But, at the same instant, Mrs. Henfrey and Liz appeared, Valentine left the carriage, Mr. Brandon put Anne Molton in; and I had no sooner taken leave of the two ladies, and noticed that Mr. Brandon looked very much out of countenance, than the train started, and, before I had time to collect my thoughts, we were several miles from Wigfield.

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